

CHALLENGES IN INDIA



By the same Author

**INDIA CHANGES!
REPORTING INDIA
BRITAIN AND INDIA
(with Maurice Zinkin)**

CHALLENGES IN INDIA

By
TAYA ZINKIN

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SRI A. D. GORWALA

SRI H. M. PATEL

and

SRI B. VENKATAPPIAH

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All the characters in this book exist and I have tried to reproduce the conversations as accurately as possible. Some of the people and places, however, have had, for obvious reasons, to be disguised.

I

AFTER NEHRU

'The cemeteries of the world are filled with the bones of indispensable men,' Sardar Patel told me shortly before he died

AFTER NEHRU

MAURICE and I were in Pakistan on the 27th May 1964 when Nehru died.

The news came over the radio just as we were sitting down to lunch with a senior Pakistani engineer. 'I wonder who will replace him,' caused the host. Nehru's death did not come as a surprise. For the past two years he had been suffering from nephritis and at the beginning of the year he had had a stroke. Everybody knew that his days were numbered. Yet, somehow, unlike our host, we felt mildly stunned and very sorry. We were not worried about the succession; nevertheless, for a fleeting instant India without Nehru was inconceivable. Like a tall banyan tree he had overshadowed India for so long that there seemed a sudden void despite the fact that his last six years had been years of steady decline.

Our host broke in: 'Typical of Nehru to choose just this moment to die! Just now, when Shukh Abdullah is in Pindi to hold discussions about the fate of Kashmir with President Ayub. Just when there is *at last* a ray of hope that we might get somewhere! Now everything will have to be set back, God knows for how long. First they will have to choose a successor; they will quarrel over the succession, when a successor is eventually found he will be a weak man and even if he wants to settle Kashmir, he will not be in a position to do so. Only Nehru could have settled Kashmir, but then Nehru never wanted to. What use are good intentions to us when there is no power to carry them out? The Kashmir problem was entirely of Nehru's own making and now we shall have to wait for ages before justice is done.'

Again and again, during the few days we spent in Pakistan I heard the same exasperation over the timing of Nehru's death—as if men chose when to die. I heard it from politicians, from civil servants, from businessmen, in Lahore, in Karachi. Few in Pakistan's upper classes felt sorry. Typical of Pakistan's official mood was the behaviour of the wife of the Pakistani high commissioner in Delhi who, alone in the entire diplomatic corps, did

not cancel her entertaining during India's period of official mourning.

The overwhelming impression in Pakistan was one of unspoken relief at the thought that the man who had been stealing all of Asia's thunder would steal it no more. From now on India would be forced back into boots of her size. A number of officials in the know, like those who had been with President Ayub at the Pindi talks with Sheikh Abdullah, argued with complete conviction that Abdullah had killed Nehru. 'The talks were progressing much better than Nehru had anticipated, and when he read in the morning papers that Sheikh Abdullah had invited Ayub to come to Delhi to meet him, Nehru had a heart attack and died. The thought of having to treat our president like an equal was too much for him!' said a very senior Pakistani diplomat I met in Karachi, but he nevertheless added, compelled by honesty, 'I must give the devil his due; he was a great gentleman, always, to his finger tips; and he was capable of rising above petty squabbles when a case of human suffering was brought to his notice. And then he spoke such chaste Urdu!'

In sharp contrast to the indifference of those in high places whose only concern was to find out who would succeed Nehru and what his views on Kashmir would be like, there was genuine sorrow amongst the common people. 'After all, until yesterday we were one. India and Pakistan,' brooded a fourteen year old schoolboy adding, 'and when Nehru spoke he gave weight to all of us in Asia. Who is going to listen to Asia now? We too have lost a great leader. It was very wrong of the principal of our school not to close it for one day.' The shop assistant felt that President Ayub had missed a great opportunity of improving relations: 'Instead of sending our foreign minister to the funeral he should have gone himself.' The fruit hawker on the Mall said much the same thing, and elaborated: 'After all, we are all brothers and it was Nehru, not Ayub, who won independence for all of us.'

I was to find the same sharp difference of attitude in India also.

By the time we arrived in India Nehru had been cremated, most of his ashes had been distributed to the various states of the Indian Union as well as to the Indian Air Force; the ashes were to be immersed in all the rivers of India and along the sea-shores

and to be scattered from the air. The government had not spared the pomp and the paraphernalia.

Typical of Nehru's relations with his people, it was they, not he, who had the last word, even over so intimate a matter as the details of his funerals. In his will, parts of which were made public at once, he had been quite explicit:

I wish to declare with all earnestness that I do not want any religious ceremonies to be performed for me after my death. I do not believe in any such ceremonies and to submit to them even as a matter of form would be hypocrisy and an attempt to delude ourselves and others. When I die they should take my body to be cremated. A small handful of my ashes should be thrown into the Ganga and the major portion of them disposed of in the manner indicated below. The major proportion of my ashes should, however, be carried high up into the air in an aeroplane and scattered from that height over fields where the peasants of India toil so that they might mingle with the dust and soil of India and become an indistinguishable part of India.

Nevertheless it had been decided to hold prayer meetings, to have priests and sadhus at the cremation and the immersions. Instead of a small handful of Nehru's ashes being immersed at Allahabad and the rest consigned to the wind, by the time each state of the Union had received its share and subdivided it into as many lots as was necessary to please all those who wanted to perform ceremonial and religious immersions, there can have been hardly a pinch of ashes left for the Air Force to scatter. Indeed when the ashes ran out, as happened in a few places, faked ashes were used instead, local leaders wanting to court popularity tricked their followers into honouring the ashes of goats. Despite his will Nehru was propelled into the cycle of rebirth with all the paraphernalia so repugnant to his fastidious agnosticism.

'It was shocking' complained an Indian journalist. 'I remember when Gandhi died. We were all in mourning, that was a *real* funeral. Everybody wept and most of us were fasting in sign of sorrow. Nobody would have dared smoke a cigarette, let alone eat during the processions, although they lasted for hours and hours. But this time it was like a picnic. In the press bus my colleagues were smoking, eating sandwiches, cracking jokes. There were even a few of them who had brought their lunch in

coffin carriers, believe it or not! And on the Ganges it was more like a regatta than a funeral. I felt really sorry for Indira and her boys; yet it serves her right for disregarding her father's wishes and allowing all this doodaa.'

India was surprisingly euphoric. The euphoria would not last; indeed since Indian poverty, linguistic and external tensions remained, with time, people who had been the fiercest critics of Nehru would miss the comfort of his presence. They might remember his weaknesses, yet they would hanker after his unifying magnetism and delude themselves that he could have solved India's problems better than his successors. With time Nehru would, like Ashoka, become a legend.

It is not easy to match up to legend, as Nehru's successors will have to do once time adds, inch by inch, as it is already doing, to the glitter of the Nehru legend. However, in the summer of 1964 time was not on Nehru's side. Legend had not yet been created.

The reaction of the old peasant in the Rajasthan desert was typical. Dressed in the picturesque costume of Kathiawar, short shirt pleated back to front, turned up slipper of embroidered leather, heavy gold ear-rings, coiled turban and flayed beard, Ram Nath Singh was smoking in the shade of his camel, which was resting under a tall casar bush. He looked so picturesque that I stopped the jeep to take his photograph. He had been to Hardwar on pilgrimage and was returning to his village near Jamnagar. Had he heard of Nehru's death? Ram Nath Singh flicked his cheroot before answering. 'Yes Nehru is dead. I heard on the radio. Once Gandhi too was alive. When he died they made him into a God and Nehru took over. Now Nehru will become a God and some other man will take over. Men die. Gods are born. What does it matter? India goes on.' Ram Nath Singh did not know that another man, by the name of Lal Bahadur Shastri, had already taken over. But he did not seem disturbed. He had never heard of Lal Bahadur Shastri. 'Shastri, Shastri,' he muttered, 'another Brahmin!' When I told him that Shastri is not a Brahmin but a Kavasth* from Uttar Pradesh his shrewd eyes grinned under bushy eyebrows. 'That is good. The people are coming into their own. One day it may even be our turn, us the Sudras.'

* The government servant caste, third in the hierarchy

The old peasant was saying in his own way what Doug Ensminger, the head of the Ford Foundation in India had said to me in 1958 when we were discussing the eternal 'after Nehru who?' Sniffing down his nose, Ensminger cleared his throat and said in that slow American voice of his: 'My dear Taya, I have no doubt that to the question "after Nehru who?" the answer will be the Indian people, and that to the question "after Nehru what?" the answer will be political stability and institutionalized government.' Or, to paraphrase the Secretary General for Foreign Affairs: 'Delhi will now become a place like Washington, where people negotiate compromise.'

The reasons for the immediate euphoria were obvious. Nehru had been sick for a long time. Indians had seen his decline at far closer quarters than the West and they had been worrying over the effect of his illness on Indian affairs. Now that he was dead they did not have to worry any longer. They were elated by the realization that though Nehru was no longer there, India was not in danger of collapsing. They had always had, at the back of their minds, a silent fear that India's unity might end with Nehru. In fact there was no sign of fissiparous tendencies. Naturally they felt a terrific sense of relief. Equally there had been no unseemly jostling for the succession.

The masses, however, shared the grief of Hari, our house boy, who said, with tears in his eyes, as we embraced: 'Mem-sahib, Ma-Bap margaya, I have lost my mother and father!' But not even Hari seemed worried about the future.

Amongst the educated, I met very few people who felt, like Hari, that they had lost their mother and father. One Muslim woman who had been most critical of Nehru only a week before his death and had wished him dead was now suffering from a profound sense of guilt and wept with sorrow. And there was a pretty young Bengali lady at dinner one night who made everybody feel quite uncomfortable by insisting that for her the world had come to an end now that Nehru was no more. 'Say what you will,' she told her husband, 'for me there can be no joy from now on, I shall be in mourning for the whole of my life.' The host later explained that she was a very silly girl and that everybody always sympathized with her husband. Then there was Tarlok Singh of the Planning Commission. Tears came to his eyes as he spoke of Nehru. A member of the Indian Civil

Service, he had been a colleague of my husband. At the time of India's independence he had served for a while as Nehru's private secretary. Ever since he had worshipped Nehru. Along amongst professional administrators Tarlok genuinely looked upon Nehru as his intellectual superior—which perhaps explains why Nehru had made an exception in his case and given him a well deserved political position in the Planning Commission, of which he had been an official since its inception. Tarlok's honest and gentle face was shining with emotion over lunch as he praised Nehru and mourned the void his death had created. Hardworking and unsophisticated Tarlok was in fact voicing in flawless English the feelings of our Hari; this, for a man in his position, was most unusual.

The majority of the educated were over critical. 'He had outlived his usefulness to the country. He ought to have died at the height of his powers in 1958. You don't know how he stuck to office even when he had begun to go senile,' said one businessman, and a journalist explained, 'At the end, all his speeches had to be carefully edited; he was quite gaga. Yet so long as he was there at the top, everything got bogged down.'

There was a widespread, and not altogether unjustified belief amongst the elite that Nehru's refusal to delegate and his incapacity to negotiate had paralyzed India, damaged industry, demoralized politicians and administrators, oppressed the public, and weakened India's position against Pakistan. One industrialist even went so far as to call Nehru 'a fool who thought himself indispensable' yet this same man only two years earlier had taken me to task for being too critical of India's Prime Minister.

Nehru had been in office too long. He had been so successful that nobody remembered just how successful he had been.

In the field of foreign affairs it was Nehru who was the first to say that the days of colonialism were over. His saying it in excellent English helped the colonial powers to appreciate how their colonies felt, and to the extent to which understanding reduces tension, some of the credit for the manner in which decolonization did take place goes to Nehru. It was Nehru who was the first to warn the world of the extent to which Russia was leading in the technological and educational revolution and again he was the first to draw from his visit to Russia the conclusion that, as

the number of technicians soared, there would have to be a thaw in Russia itself. From this conclusion it was only logical to go on to assert that a great deal could be gained and nothing could be lost by keeping the Iron Curtain ajar. This is why it was left to Nehru to be the first non-Communist leader to visit Russia and to invite the Soviet leaders to come out of their shell and see the free world. Nehru's example in inviting Khrushchev and Bulganin was followed by the Western powers as soon as they recovered from their erroneous belief that Nehru was a Soviet stooge. Again it was Nehru who was the first to warn the world that it was racing itself into nuclear destruction, and who pleaded for nuclear arms control failing nuclear disarmament. (But it must be noted in Nehru's favour as a responsible statesman that this did not deter him from ensuring that India would one day be able to manufacture nuclear weapons as an insurance against the eventual failure of his own wishful foreign policy. It is thanks to Nehru's unstinting backing of Dr Homi Bhabha's Atomic Energy Commission that India has a plutonium extractor.) It was Nehru who first created the concepts of aid without strings and of non-alignment in the Cold War. Aid without strings has become the accepted practice, non-alignment has been followed by most of the newly emergent nations which it suits admirably. It is an irony of history that the only country which has been ill served by the doctrine of non-alignment should be the country of its birth.

On the domestic front Nehru's successes are, if more basic, fewer. They too have been so fully absorbed that few remembered them in Nehru's favour at the time of his death. The greatest success of all has been his own continuity in office, a continuity which could be traced back to long before independence, to the thirties when he already spoke for the Congress as Gandhi's designated heir. Next and equally important has been the consolidation of the democratic tradition which was dear to his heart, as well as making the new India, modern minded and secular in the sense of not going back to Hindu rituals for symbolic inspiration. Nehru all his life showed great deference to the parliamentary process, and he was the leader of the house for so long that the parliamentary process has taken roots under his careful nurturing; just as his habit of giving way to public opinion, once public opinion began to assert itself, if necessary

with bloodshed, has given the public a taste of power which they are not likely to forego easily. Thus continuity, parliamentary ways and popular consent combined in the Nehru era to strengthen democracy in the second largest country in the world. Another of Nehru's contributions has been the way he has tried to change society by consent and taxation rather than by coercion and revolution. He took the reform of Hindu law to the electorate before bulldozing it through parliament, and all the measures which were taken in his time to achieve equality were highly constitutional. Nobody was expropriated, not even the princes; nobody was shot without trial, and the Communists were allowed to win an election in one of the states. Another of Nehru's contributions for which he will be remembered one day with gratitude is the way he put India on the world map as if she were already one of the major powers; this conjuring feat has had its drawbacks: India has few friends and two dangerous enemies, Pakistan and China; but it did have the advantage, during the formative years, of making it possible for the younger generation in India to grow up without any chip on its shoulder. Nehru's successes were indeed many.

In time they will be remembered and magnified; just as his failures will be forgotten and virtues he never possessed attributed to him. When there are so many successes there are bound to be failures.

Nehru's failures were as much the result of the sort of person he was as were his successes. He was vague, he had a limited understanding of the immediate problem. He had a magnificent historical vision, but all too often this led him to do nothing at all about the difficulties of the moment, until they became so complicated, so institutionalized, so mixed up with all sorts of other considerations, that they became almost insoluble. Certainly they are far harder for his successors than they would have been if Nehru had been some much smaller man, who had applied himself to the business in hand instead of leaving India caught up between his immediate myopia and the perception of his long historical view.

The opportunity for his successors, however, is that they can be smaller. They can muddle through, and compromise, and look to the day-to-day, and because they are new, because they are less great, they can become greater.

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Despite his devotion to the democratic way the first cost of Nehru was the suspension of normality. This was the inevitable result of his personality. His was so towering a person that so long as he lived India could not settle down into being a normal place; as Frank Moraes, the editor of the *Indian Express* put it: 'Nehru was a superman; with him politics was bigger than life. Now we can be normal at last' Because of Nehru's dominance at the centre, Indian politics which after all are by definition federal, could not settle down into the day-to-day working of the federal pattern. Nehru told the chief ministers what to do; he did not consult them in a real sense. Thus he failed doubly. He failed once by standing in the way of the give-and-take necessary to a federal constitution, and he failed again by not using his immense prestige to direct the people along the right lines, whether it was cow-slaughter which they insisted on banning, or linguistic states which he opposed. Nehru's words were universally read, but much less universally listened to. The states went on doing what local politicians who did not owe their position to Nehru wanted to do.

Nehru's most serious failure was his inability to use the admirable administrative machine he had inherited from the British. No administrator himself, he behaved like someone shackled to a fractious mule which, he would argue, went its traditional way irrespective of the rider's directives. However, blame in this case lies with the rider, not the mule. Nehru always created exceptions, he never created precedents. So long as the prime minister grumbled without issuing orders or changing the procedure, the administration was bound to carry on in its time-honoured way. Instead of criticizing the machinery of government as if he was the leader of the opposition he should have initiated procedural changes. As a result of his erratic ways, under the perpetual lash of his criticism the administration deteriorated somewhat and lost some of its earlier enthusiasm; one of the first tasks waiting his successor would be to repair the damage to administrative morale created by Nehru's favouritism, and mental confusion.

Again, Nehru had inherited from Gandhi and Sardar Patel a political movement which was both efficient and high minded as political movements go. But Nehru's incapacity to judge men, his weakness for counsellors, his impatience with criticism added

to the contempt with which he regarded the social and economic values dear to the old Gandhians, above all his affection for corrupt and expedient men weakened the Congress party and one of the first tasks his successors would be faced with would be that of cleaning up the party and squashing factions.

Like so many great men Nehru's rule had been so personal as to be destructive; his relations with people were so mercurial that most politicians and administrators always felt ambivalent about him, not the best way to inspire good government from either. A senior administrator, who had worked very closely with Nehru for many years and who shared many of his views on foreign affairs and on socialism, explained why people had never been neutral as far as Nehru was concerned. There was always an element of love-hate. Yes, love-hate! He could be so charming, so considerate, so inspiring; one worked for him round the clock. Then, suddenly, he could be so remote, so exasperating; so vague; so incapable of taking an administrative decision, any decision for that matter; one found oneself without support, having to go back on one's tracks. He could neither delegate nor administer and at times he could be so rude. Yet he was a totally dedicated man. He shortened his life by a couple of years by refusing to delegate. I have no doubt that it will now be much easier to negotiate and settle issues. This was already very much the case with Shastri.

When Nehru died many problems were left in mid-air. Some, like the deterioration of relations with Ceylon or the trouble in Nagaland, look as if they are now well on the way to solution. Some, like Kashmir, have become very intractable. Most difficult of all may yet prove Nehru's deepest concern, the position of the Indian Muslims, in a sense the other side of the Kashmiri coin. The position of India's 50 million Muslims was as close to Nehru's heart as Calais to Queen Mary's. Genuinely secular, Nehru failed to realize that the only way to get Muslims accepted after the part they had played in Muslim League days was to settle relations with Pakistan and treat them as normal citizens. Instead he treated them as favoured citizens and continued to treat Pakistan as a minor without consequence and stood, at the earlier stages, in the way of a Kashmir settlement he could easily have enforced upon India. By the time he died Kashmir had become almost insoluble; relations with Pakistan had been

SHASTRI

further poisoned by Pakistan's flirtation with China and the Indian Muslims had become hostages, not of Indian secularism, but of Pakistan's good behaviour.

That Nehru, on the eve of his death realized how many messes he was leaving behind is clear. During his last few weeks, he had, against doctor's orders, tried to put things right, and killed himself in the process. He had held meetings with Sheikh Abdullah, whom he had sent to Pakistan, he had held meetings with the Reverend Michael Scott and the Nagas; he had gone to the Nepalese border for talks with King Mahendra of Nepal; he had held a press conference, shattered by the recent communal riots he had made an appeal on the radio for Hindu-Muslim unity, all this in the killing heat of a hot end of May. Morarji Desai, one of the most senior of Congress politicians explained that Nehru had been exhausted during the last year but that he had absolutely convinced himself that without him India would descend into chaos, the south would separate from the north, Pakistan would attack, Hindus would massacre Muslims, China would invade and the Congress would quarrel. 'It was only his strong sense of duty to the nation that kept him going. In a way he thought he *was* India'

India is greater than Nehru. Nehru killed himself because he failed to realize it. After his death they found on his working desk these lines from Robert Frost, copied in his own hand:

The woods are lovely, dark and deep
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep'

SHASTRI

So long as Nehru was alive there had been various favourites for the succession. Some of them died before Nehru; others lost popularity because of their rigidity and their fads; others did not inspire enough confidence or were considered too parochial. Above all, whoever would succeed Nehru had to be a very different sort of man just as Truman had been different from

Roosevelt. What India needed after the Nehru era was a holiday from the limelights, a man reasonable and modest enough to allow India's domestic tensions to work themselves out the Federal instead of the Viceregal way. Such a man existed. His greatest asset was the extent to which he differed from Nehru, which is probably why he was elected by unanimous vote in the tradition created by Gandhi.

What sort of man was India's second Prime Minister? The most striking thing about him was his size. He was five feet small and of very slight build. What he lacked in height he possessed in humour. It amused him to emphasize his smallness by getting himself photographed next to six-footers. When the Communists in parliament attacked Congress Ministers for travelling in huge imported cars, Lal Bahadur Shastri intervened. 'Mr Speaker,' he said 'I would like to assure my honourable colleague that there is at least *one* Minister who cannot be *seen* in his huge imported car, and that is me.' Receiving on behalf of India a cattle feed plant presented by Oxfam, Shastri surpassed himself. The Oxfam delegates towered over him, one, a beefy Briton was not only 6 foot 4 but almost as wide; the other, who came of Germanic stock was if anything, bulkier still. Shastri standing between the two of them, waited patiently for the microphone to be lowered to his level looking like the expensive filling of some cheap sandwich almost not there. When the microphone was ready he thanked the people of the affluent countries for their kindness to India and wistfully looking up at the two Oxfam representatives added, 'The difference between the standard of living in the affluent and the developing countries is huge, so huge indeed that the only way I can make you realize how much we have to progress if we are ever to reach their level, would be to say that between them and us there is the same difference in height as there is between me and these two gentlemen — and, come to think of it, for that matter not just in height, but in width as well.'

Shastri did not lack courage either. When a boy he once swam across the Ganges with his school books held high above his head, because he did not have enough money for the ferry; the Ganges at Benares is both wide and fast and a swimmer is liable to bump into some half charred-corpse. But Shastri's courage was not merely physical — he was capable of taking the hard

political option. He pressed Nehru to make Jaya Prakash Narayan a Cabinet Minister and to designate him as his heir at a time when Jaya Prakash Narayan was being called a traitor because of his liberal attitude to the Nagas and Kashmir.

India's second Prime Minister, Lal Bahadur Srivastava, known as Shastri,* was so different from his predecessor that one can only make negative comparisons between the two. Indeed, so inconspicuous was Nehru's successor, that for many years, although he was in the Cabinet nobody took much notice of him, and he remained pretty well unknown. There was however one man, a British information officer by the name of D'Aignault Taylor, who showed great perspicacity. Way back, in 1952, when Shastri was made a Minister for the first time, he told me: 'Watch that man Shastri. One day, he will succeed Nehru as Prime Minister. Who is Shastri?' 'He is a little man, nothing much to look at but his character. He is honest, unassuming, hard working, very likeable. He has no enemies and he is not the sort of person to make enemies. He is honest and known to be honest.' D'Aignault Taylor sat back and added, after a while, 'He is not ambitious. You will see that when it comes to the succession there will be many contenders but they will foul their chances by howling ambitions joining factions not Shastri.' D'Aignault Taylor might have been peering into the future instead of a crystal ball.

Born in 1904 at Mughlukhera, a town best known for its railway junction, Shastri went to school in Benares. He gave up his English education in 1927 in answer to Gandhi's boycott call and joined the non-cooperation movement. He completed his studies at the Banarasi Hindu University, the Kashi Vidyapeeth — after a spell in jail. In all he went to jail six times and served sentences totalling 7½ years. His political debuts were in his native State and he only came to the Centre in 1952 as Minister for Railways, as a reward for his work as Congress Secretary in organizing the election campaign of 1951. It is typical of the man that the first time he made the Indian headlines he did so negatively when he resigned in 1956 after a derailment in which 144 people lost their lives. Nobody expected him to resign. In India resignations, unless they are motivated by political protest, are never voluntary. People enjoy being cremated in office.

* An honorific title given to those who have a doctorate in Sanskrit studies

Shastri, by resigning, wanted to assert the principle of ministerial responsibility. He was called back to the Cabinet by Nehru in 1958 as Minister for Commerce and Industry. He was a good, if inconspicuous, Minister who never threw his weight about and was always polite to everybody—including the meanest creatures. Because he let his department do the work people used to say he had no mind of his own. This was not true. One of his senior administrators always insisted that appearances were deceptive. 'He keeps an open mind to the very end. He listens patiently to all sides. He only makes up his mind when he has heard the last argument and the last speaker, when he feels that he knows all the pros and cons. Then he makes up his mind himself and is quite firm. He sticks to his decision unless there is some fact to change the arguments. And when he chairs a meeting he is a past master at getting everyone to speak and then he gets the maximum agreement that can be got by the simple process of not obtruding his views until the others have had their full say.'

This assessment is similar to Shastri's own. This is what Shastri once said about himself: 'I listen to different points of view. I have the capacity of understanding different points of view. I keep an open mind. I talk to different sets of people,' he said in Parliament in 1956 at the time of his resignation to colleagues trying to persuade him to stay on. Perhaps due to my being small in size and soft in tongue people are apt to believe that I am not able to be very firm with them. Though not physically strong I think that I am internally not so weak. And when he became Home Minister he told a press conference that he had been connected with the administration for a long time and wanted to reform the procedure because there is delay in the disposal of papers and cases, then there is corruption at different levels... Although I am a mediocre, yet I find that a mediocre like me is able to produce something new and original, not in a very high sense, but whatever new things are suggested in the Ministry, well they generally come from me. He was not boasting. Thus it is entirely due to Shastri that an agreement has at last been reached over the status of the Indians in Ceylon and that a solution would have been worked out with Pakistan over the Rann of Kutch had Pakistan infiltration in Kashmir not come in the way of the Indian Parliament ratifying arbitration.

While he was Minister for Commerce and Industry Shastri

also did a great deal of Congress party work, patching up quarrels behind the scene. He worked such long hours that he had eventually to take six months off after a severe heart attack in 1959. In 1960, after the death of India's ailing Home Minister Pandit Pant, Nehru, who was increasingly relying upon Shastri, made him Home Minister. Unlike his Cabinet colleagues Shastri never hesitated to promote his views even when they were not to Nehru's liking. Thus, from the time he became Home Minister he pressed Nehru to release Sheikh Abdullah (the Kashmir leader who had been gaoled in 1953), and at the time of the Chinese build-up, when it was so important for Nehru to keep the Soviet Union on India's side, Shastri did not hesitate to tell a press conference that 'the Indian Communist leaders go to Moscow and get the line there which they then try to carry out here.' At all times he was quite blunt about the desirability of reforming the Congress party and the Government of the more corrupt of its members, such as Pratap Singh Kairon, the Chief Minister of the Punjab, whom Nehru defended tooth and nail to the end.*

It was once said of Shastri that he was a humble man with much to be humble about. The witticism was misleading. Whatever Shastri achieved, he owed entirely to himself. He had no rich father to support him, his father, a modest teacher, died when he was a year and a half old. No patron crowned him his successor. Whatever Nehru had, Shastri lacked. He had never been abroad before becoming Prime Minister. He has only one book to his credit, a biography of Madame Curie, and in Hindi at that. He happily married and had a large family. He did not enjoy gracious living. When he became Prime Minister he insisted on continuing to live in the house he occupied as Home Minister—a house which in British days was of the category allotted to Secretaries to Government. Nehru who, as interim Prime Minister, already occupied a very luxurious house which is now an Embassy, moved into the Imperial Commander-in-Chief's estate. Shastri was not rich. He lived austere but without fads. He was a life member of the Servants of the Peoples Society—an Indian equivalent of the Quakers and before

* Pratap Singh Kairon was murdered, but not before he had been forced to resign after Nehru's death because the judge of the Supreme Court who enquired into his conduct found him guilty of misuse of authority.

becoming Prime Minister of India he had to seek permission from the Society, to which he gave 300 rupees every month out of his Prime Ministerial salary. This left him with only 1,250 rupees a month after tax on which to live and bring up those of his children who were not grown up. Nehru, who gave away nothing,* received much more and had a handsome private income besides. Whereas Nehru was an agnostic, Shastri was a good Hindu who did not feel ashamed of his religion's ritual. The only things that he and Nehru had in common were that both of them came from the same State, the U.P., and that both were compulsive workers.

But whereas Nehru's day was organized with clockwork regularity, Shastri's day tended to be chaotic. Nehru was always accessible to his officials, Shastri was always accessible to the public; as a result his officials found it difficult to see him. When he was Minister for Commerce and Industry he used to go to his office between five and half past in the evening and stay there till 10 or even later. His day began at 7.30 with yogic exercises, and when possible the handspinning incumbent on all good Gandhians. He saw visitors and dealt with Congress party matters before going to Parliament, if it was in session. He saw more visitors in his Parliamentary office, and from his Secretariat office he went home to receive more visitors. His meals, which he took in office hours, were usually shared with his office staff. Victim of a compulsive tendency to work, his day lasted between 17 and 18 hours. Small wonder he had a heart attack.

When he became Prime Minister Shastri's work-load increased. Typical of the way in which he was refusing to spare himself is what happened when I tried to interview him a month after he had assumed office.

His official commitments were so many that two of his senior administrators, who were having great difficulty in seeing him themselves, failed to secure an appointment for me although they did all they could to help. In despair I decided to try my luck and gate-crash. I had been told that the Prime Minister was accessible to all those who were prepared to take their chance and come to his garden in the morning. At the gate there was a tent in which a few policemen and a secretary kept an eye

* Except his father's old house in Allahabad. He kept the newer house for himself and his family.

on visitors. Despite my plea that I was going back to England shortly and had to get an interview they refused to help. Shastri, the secretary said, was very busy and had already had to put off seeing nine foreign correspondents who had asked for interviews long before me. It was out of the question that I should see the Prime Minister. Eventually the secretary relented a bit. 'You cannot speak to him, but if you like, you can sit in the garden and that way at least you will be able to have a look at him when he comes out into the garden as he usually does. He likes walking up and down when he is talking to visitors. But you will not be able to speak to him.'

Once inside, a friendly young man to whom I confided my purpose suggested 'You will see Shastri much better if we walk about the garden, we might even be lucky and come in his way, he may even speak to us.' We got up and casually walked about looking at the grass. Just as the policeman who had been somewhat uncooperative at the gate was going to catch up with us, Shastri came out of the house walking in our direction. Seeing me he said a word to the private secretary who was walking by his side and came straight at us and said, 'How do you do, Mrs Zinkin! Extending both hands he shook mine and with a twinkle added, 'I have read all your books, you know. You are a very dangerous person. You will have to be very kind to me.'

I laughed. 'Only the truth can hurt, is it not, so why are you bothered?'

'Quite so, quite so. It is not the truth which can hurt.'

We walked along while I explained that I had come back to write a book on India and that I would be most grateful for an interview. I knew how busy he was.*

Shastri stopped, thought for a moment and said, 'All right, I shall see you.' His secretary protested that he was fully booked and that there were the nine foreign correspondents waiting before me. Very gently Shastri said, 'I will see you; you had

* He was then Foreign Minister as well as Prime Minister and that week he had all the Chief Ministers in Delhi for a conference and there was a Food Conference to deal with the emergency created by two bad monsoons. In addition he was engaged in Cabinet reshuffles and had not appointed all his Ministers, and Sucheta Kripalani - the Chief Minister of the U.P. - had come to ask him to umpire the fight for power between her and Kamalapati Tripathi, an old Nehru protégé.

better make an appointment with my secretary; he will give you some time.'

'Could it please be in the morning?' I hazarded, fearing he would be tired in the evening.

'That depends, probably it will be in the evening, at my house; take her telephone number and fix the time and the day. Now you must excuse me, I have some work and then I must go to the Chief Ministers' meeting. I imagine you will be there too,' and with a smile and a fold of the hands he took leave and went back into the house.

The Chief Ministers' conference was open to the press for the first hour. I was standing by the entrance when Shastri came out of his car. He smiled at me, asked if I had given my telephone number to his secretary, and walked in. He opened the proceedings with a well prepared speech which he supplemented by reading out notes wherever he wanted to quote facts and figures. He spoke in a clear, gentle voice; he was talking, not lecturing. He explained to his colleagues the difficulties which they had to try and solve by putting their heads together, particularly in respect of food and agriculture. He expected each man to do his utmost to solve the crisis. He did not dictate the way. He did not lay down the targets, this he left to the experts. When he sat down after half an hour the audience was charmed. 'Nehru would have rambled for at least an hour; he would not have been to the point and he would have laid down the law as if he were talking to children,' whispered an Indian journalist who was sitting behind me.

That evening Shastri's private secretary rang me. 'The Prime Minister will see you at his residence the day after tomorrow evening after 10.30, that is, if you do not mind waiting for it might be 11 o'clock or even later, it all depends on how much work he will have.'

On the morning of the evening I was to see Shastri his private secretary rang up to say the appointment would have to be cancelled, the Prime Minister was running a slight temperature. In fact Shastri had had a mild heart attack—a warning that one cannot work oneself to the wool if one wants to remain Prime Minister for long. The attack was a blessing in disguise. Under pressure from his doctors Shastri reduced his work-load; he appointed a Foreign Minister and a very senior civil servant as

his personal private secretary. The idea was that the secretary would protect him from working too much. However, when Shastri came to London in 1965 for the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference I noticed that the principal Private Secretary, an old friend of ours fully ten years younger than Shastri, looked the shadow of his old self. Shastri himself looked remarkably fresh.

On my return from India, I was constantly asked what were Shastri's views on different problems, what he would say when faced with a certain situation, what he would do. To most questions I had to plead ignorance. Unlike Nehru, Shastri did not believe in crossing his bridges before he came to them. This had great advantages. Whatever his personal views he began uncommitted, and was therefore able to follow the counsels of prudence without apparent loss of face. This did not, however, mean that he had no views. In signing the Declaration of Tashkent Shastri was reaffirming, under different circumstances, a policy on Kashmir and relations with Pakistan which, if left to himself and if he had been able to get away with it, two very big ifs indeed, he would always have followed.

Before he became Prime Minister of India Shastri wanted to solve Kashmir by letting Sheikh Abdullah out of jail and by trying to get Pakistan to agree to Kashmir remaining an independent Andorra-like buffer state. However, on succeeding Nehru he had to revise his views in the face of public opinion. 'You do not expect me to commit harakiri do you?' he asked a friend who suggested the very solution which was dear to Shastri's common sense and liking for fair play. Nor did Shastri hesitate to put under house arrest the very Sheikh Abdullah he had urged Nehru to release once his talks with Chou en-Li made his continued freedom a political embarrassment. In other words Shastri was practical. During his visit to London in 1965 he admitted that his *modus operandi* was pragmatic. 'I used to share Lord Russell's views on nuclear disarmament,' he told a reporter, adding with a disarming smile 'I was not in office then. I have since learnt that some things are good in theory which are impossible in practice.' I have no doubt that had Shastri lived on he would have had no compunction in acquiring nuclear weapons if it had seemed politically or strategically necessary and if it proved impossible to obtain the hands-off-Asia declara-

tion which he sought from the nuclear powers. He did not trust the Russians, and yet he agreed to their supplying India with submarines when Britain failed to do so. He was just as eager as Nehru would have been to get the Russians to sign the contract for Bokaro India's fourth steel plant. This does not mean that Shastri was a man of expedients, merely that he was pre-eminently reasonable.

During his tenure of office Shastri did in fact reach a settlement with Ceylon, and relations with Nepal improved a great deal. He resolved, at least for the time being, the sudden dispute with Pakistan over the Rann of Kutch by accepting arbitration and again applied cautious moderation at Tashkent.

On the domestic front, he succeeded in pruning the Congress party of most of its discreditable stars, he accepted the resignation of Pratap Singh Karon, he forced an enquiry into the affairs of Biju Patnaik, the ex-Chief Minister of Orissa and one of Nehru's favourites, and forced Patnaik's number two to resign from the Chief Ministership of Orissa as a result of the findings of that enquiry. He did all he could to restore administrative confidence by backing his officials. On the linguistic front he so managed matters that English has had to be given a place of honour for all time, on the same footing as Hindi. There are two versions of the way Shastri played his hand. According to one version Shastri, himself a Hindufestive, precipitated the issue by allowing the Constitution to take its course and English to be displaced by Hindi as the national language from the 26th January 1965. Enraged by the distribution of central government notices in Hindi, people in Madras rioted and a few enthusiasts put an end to their own lives by burning themselves to death or swallowing lethal insecticides. Then martyrdom was not in vain. Shastri announced in effect that English would, with Hindi, be a federal language for all time. According to those who know Shastri well, the way he played it was neither for nor against Hindi, but in favour of the largest common denominator. Politics is after all nothing but passion multiplied by numbers. Had enough lovers of Hindi been prepared to burn themselves and swallow insecticides, no doubt Hindi would have won the toss. What the pro-English riots and deaths conclusively proved to Shastri, and to the rest of India, was that feeling for English was stronger than feeling against it; the decision hither-

to overlaid by speculation had at last been dictated by popular feeling. All that Shastri had done was to give the contenders the field while he played umpire, just as he said he did when listening to a meeting of officials or politicians.

On the food front he was less successful. There still are severe food shortages in India, despite the bumper crop of 1965; Indian villagers eat more and better and therefore they sell less to the towns where the shortages occur. Shastri's failure however should not be exaggerated. Not even the British, let alone Nehru, succeeded. There was a great deal of impatience with Shastri for letting the Chief Ministers get away with hogging food grains in their own states instead of sharing with less fortunate neighbours. But Nehru, who talked as if he was obeyed by the Chief Ministers, was not listened to at all. Shastri at least told his public that if he could manage to get the Chief Ministers to agree of their own free will to cooperate there might be some chance that they would keep their promise. The trouble was not with Shastri but with the Indian Constitution, which does not give the Prime Minister the whip hand when it comes to extracting food from the States of the Union. Under the Constitution food procurement is a state and not a central subject, nor can the Constitution easily be changed. Amendment requires a two thirds majority in Parliament and there are enough MPs from food surplus states to block any amendment.

Finally, to the question, "After Shastri who and what?" I have had no answer beyond saying that it is not really a matter of such vital importance. I do. I have felt and still feel, is big enough to provide a person sufficiently sensible to act as a focal point for the easing of federal tension. Nations do not need father figures once they are born. India was fortunate in having two towering politicians in succession. Shastri answered to its subsequent need for a period of consolidation. At this stage in the development of modern India, almost anybody who does not arouse violent reactions and is not pathological can do the job.

II

CORRUPTION

'Money is like water, it washes everything', goes an
Iranian proverb.

CORRUPTION

WHAT is corruption? Corruption is complex and variable; it can be absolute or relative. As far as India is concerned only four types of corruption matter: tips, nepotism, bribery and cheating the Government.

Tips are the obscurest case. When it leaked out that I had given a few rupees to the sweeper of the Delhi Gymkhana Club where we were living soon after our marriage, I was nearly expelled by the Secretary for 'trying to suborn a Club servant' and I had to apologize to the Committee. In British, or British-styled clubs, tipping is an attempt to get a special advantage for oneself, a form of corruption. How was I, a Frenchwoman, to know? In France one always tips.

On the other hand Indian villagers often consider the extra payment they make to the revenue accountant for an extract from village records as a tip, and some businessmen do not mind tipping railway staff to get into the air-conditioned carriage. Yet tips of that kind are very different from tips given to, say, a head-waiter for getting a good table because, in the case of the revenue accountant or the railway clerk the employer is the State—and the State, unlike a hotel or a restaurant, should not tolerate favours. Favours where the State is concerned become corruption.

However, some cases are really difficult to assess. I have an Indian friend who asked a London policeman to help her cut a Bank Holiday queue and get her into the first-class railway carriage at Victoria Station. When she got into her carriage she slipped him a pound note; ever since she claims that Britons are just as corrupt as Indians. Is she right? Was it a tip or a bribe?

Nepotism. The western definition of nepotism is clear. Nepotism is only acceptable in the City and, to a lesser extent, in politics. But in India what should and should not be done is less clear. In traditional Indian circumstances the first duty of the individual is to help his kin, his sub-caste, his caste, his clan, his village, and he may be considered immoral for not being

nepotic. The duty to help one's kin was considered sacred. Thus even Mahatma Gandhi, who later disowned one of his sons for misconduct, began his career in India by trying to influence a Government official in favour of his brother; he was so insistent that he had to be bodily thrown out of the office.

Bribery is an obvious case which does not change with hemispheres or longitudes. However, there are great differences in the moral importance of the offence. To bribe an office clerk to push one's file to the top of the pile is a peccadillo compared with bribing a police constable to implicate an innocent man in a murder case in order to get even in a family feud.

Cheating Government is a rag bag in which there is room for every imaginable form of abuse or sin ranging from the misuse by politicians of official cars or the public's avoidance of taxation to engineers stealing Government stores or passing inferior work or giving contracts to the wrong people. Cheating the Government includes embezzlement as well as evasion of exchange regulations--all of them constitute corruption, in varying degrees.

In some countries corruption has become a way of life. In Iran corruption pervades life. Iranians take pride in telling stories about their government servants who are so badly paid that they are expected to make up their pay somehow. During my visits to Iran I was told that they have two ways of doing so. One is to charge the public for their services, in addition to such pay as the Government gives them. The other way is to work somewhere else while being paid by the Government. This is made possible by the fact that there are about four times more people on the Government's pay roll than is necessary; only one of them comes to work, the other three merely clock in--or pay him to clock in for them--and work for somebody else full time. The civil servant who actually works for the Government takes a rake off from the salaries of his absentee colleagues; this is only fair since he does their jobs. In Iran one is told that everything is for sale, even being allowed to see the Peacock Throne outside visiting hours; the only requirement is to know whom to pay and how much. Corruption in Iran is so much a habit that officials are sometimes careless about the details. In 1947 when I was there, they had failed to realize that an Iranian passport may be worth more to a non-Iranian, with the result that they

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charged the same flat rate, on top of the official fee, for issuing a passport whether the applicant was an Iranian national, a Soviet citizen or stateless. Corruption in Iran survives because it suits everybody. Thus in 1958 the Iranian students who were travelling with me on the bus to Turkey on their way to study abroad were indignant when they discovered that the Turkish customs officials, unlike their Iranian colleagues, refused bribes and insisted on making them pay for the contraband goods they were taking with them to America. In fact as they were in transit, had they declared the gold watches and bracelets which covered their arms from wrist to nupt, they would not have had any trouble.

In some countries a great deal of public corruption can co-exist with a great deal of private honesty. Thus in Brazil until 1964 customs officials expected as of right to get a 1% rake off on shipping imports from abroad. President Kubitschek, it is said, greatly added to his wealth during the five years of his presidency. Yet despite the fact that everybody in Brazil still talks of 'Ined no' as he affectionately called him, and his corruption nobody can hold it seriously against him. However, the same affection is lacking towards President Goulart against whom the charge of incompetence even more than corruption is levelled with unanimity. Both Kubitschek and Goulart have had to flee Brazil, yet in neither case had their estates been confiscated when I visited Brazil in 1965, although Acts had been passed by the new Government depriving both of them of political rights for ten years in the interest of peace and the national honour.

This tolerance of public corruption does not however mean that the people are themselves corrupt. Indeed the standards of private honesty in Brazil are amongst the highest in the world. In a land where, thanks to a chronic and spiralling inflation, everything has been bought on hire purchase for years the percentage of defaulters is the lowest in the world. This is the more remarkable when one remembers that in Brazil *everything* is bought on hire purchase, from underwear and wines for parties to houses and bullion.

India is a half way case. People object to corruption as violently as in Britain or Sweden, much more violently than in Paris, Rome, Boston or New York. Yet corruption is also deeply

ingrained in certain Indian habits. Lower Government servants have always been tipped; Marwari businessmen have always been notorious for keeping three sets of books (one for the tax inspector, one for their partners and one for themselves); temptation to nepotism is endemic. In Northern India, especially in the Punjab, bribing and cheating the Government are old — much less so in Southern India, especially in Bombay and Madras.

That people now talk more and more about corruption is partly because in some ways it may have got worse, but partly too because the objection even to its most accepted forms is getting fiercer all the time. The younger generation is anti-corruption.

BEFORE INDEPENDENCE

THE British whose record at the time of the East India Company does not bear scrutiny tried to make amends by the very high standard of the Imperial Services once India became a responsibility of the Crown. For a long time the pay was made fully adequate above all the pressure of family obligations were missing because of the very fact that India was 6,000 miles away from the relatives of the men who ruled India.

As a result the behaviour of the Imperial Services was admirable, so admirable that it even spread to organized industry, but in order to be so, it had to be of the most rigid.

The extent to which one cannot be careful enough with one's reputation is perhaps best illustrated by the story which was told many years later by Sir Purshotamdas Thakurdas, one of India's leading industrialists and a man of the highest morality. In the days of the great cricketer Ranjitsinghji, a new and very young political agent was posted to his capital of Nawanagar. Hearing that the young Briton had just arrived and was going to call on the Palace to present his credentials, straight from the railway station, the Ruler sent his carriage to bring him. The young officer thanked the driver, told him to go back to the Palace, and hailed a tonga — that uncomfortable, rickety horse

carriage on two wheels—and drove to the Palace. "That is real honesty for you. He had made clear to the Ruler, from the word go, that he could not be influenced; and you know to be strict with the great Ranjit Singhji was something!"

The young Political Agent was right. It is when one is still new and has one's reputation to make, whether it is in the Government or in business that temptations are put in one's way. But only the temptable go on being tempted. Very soon people get to know that you do not take bribes and they cease offering them, very shortly one has no merit in remaining honest. The rules of the Government were very strict. Officials could accept only gifts of fruit and floral garlands, everything else had to be handed over to the Government's Toshakhana, the gift shop where in due course it would be auctioned off. To get round this rule about gift-petitioners used to hide money, sometimes jewels or a bottle of whisky at the bottom of a fruit basket. I knew one perfectly honest British civil servant in the Punjab whose wife had become notorious for the way she would accept hidden gifts unknown to her husband, she would then do her best to influence his decision in favour of the donor.

When my husband was new to the duties of Assistant Collector, his bearer was bought by the name of Sheikh Hussein, used to trade up on his supposed influence on his master. For a fee he would promise to put a word in whether it was a petition or a court case or an agricultural loan. This came to Maurice's notice as he was giving an adverse judgement against a money-lender who protested that he had given Sheikh Hussein five rupees and been assured that the case would be decided in his favour. Maurice was so angry that he had the money-lender handcuffed and paraded through the little town in an attempt to teach both of them a lesson. But he was not firm enough, he did not sack Sheikh Hussein for whom he had a soft spot. Eventually, when we got married, Sheikh Hussein who could no longer supplement his income from the household money, and who had already had to give up nothing money by other means, left of his own accord. The last blow had not been my taking over the accounts but Maurice's transfer to a more senior position in Delhi, a position so senior that his bearer had no contact with those who wanted something from the Saheb. Loyal to himself to the bitter end Sheikh Hussein tried to persuade me to

use my influence in getting Maurice to ask to be sent back to the district: 'In district Saheb Lord Saheb, in Delhi Saheb miere Kalark. In district Memsahab and self big status, here we nobody.'

Power breeds corruption. Some forms of corruption are so marginal, so invisible, so unprovable that those in positions of responsibility cannot be careful enough about the company they keep. When Maurice first joined the Indian Civil Service he had been warned not to associate with people who might conceivably gain something from knowing him or being seen in his company. That explains much of the 'aloofness' of the Service, 'aloofness' which caused much heartburn in the old India. The officials did not want to be in a position where they might be able to oblige or disoblige someone who had become a friend.

Whether in government or later in business, Maurice never accepted, or allowed me to accept, a gift of anything more than fruit. In order not to hurt the donor's feelings, if it was a gift he felt he could not accept or refuse, he would send by return of post a gift of equivalent price. One of his wholesalers, a delightful old man, took a fancy to me and fell into the detestable habit of presenting me with a fairly expensive and as far as I was concerned, totally useless suit of very sheer chiffon and very old fashioned design every time he saw me. For each suit I had to find a suitable return present in kind which would give the old gentleman pleasure. Whenever we left India to go on leave Kahanji Dhundji would appear at the airport waving a sari. No amount of tactful discussion cured him, and since he was already my husband's wholesaler and did not stand to gain from his gifts one had to be gentle. Our presents to him had the disadvantages of cluttering up our luggage allowance, of having to pay duty and of taking a lot of imagination. I brought him back a silver tinkard which played music when lifted, I brought him back a silver box for cigarettes which played music when opened, I brought him back a picnic set with unusual designs; I brought him back an electric torch with a built-in portable electric hand-fan, I brought him back a musical fountain-pen-and-can-opener. Mercifully Maurice got transferred before I ran out of gadgets.

The need to be watchful had been drilled into me by Maurice from the start — one can never be too careful. I had heard of the

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present hidden at the bottom of the mango basket, but not till a trip we made to the forsaken town of Rewa did anything like it happen to me. Rewa is really nowhere, the only place where one can stay is the dak bungalow, which is far from clean or comfortable. When we arrived there, exhausted from a long and hot journey, we found that the local dealer whose inefficiency Maurice had come to investigate had left some food for us in the bedroom on a dusty and cheap metal tray covered with a red and white dirty kitchen cloth. On the tray there was an array of oddments: a packet of biscuits, a tin of herring in tomato sauce, a tin of salted peanut, a bottle of barley water, some wilting flowers. Maurice told me to return the tray to the dealer's servant who was hanging about waiting to be of some use. Intrigued by this extraordinarily ill-thought-out assortment I decided to investigate again before handing it back. Under the tin of herrings in tomato sauce I found a small flat cardboard box which had once had on it by the label on it been used for storing plastic comb. Inside this fly-pocked box there was a gold Longines ladies watch. Needless to say this did not help the dealer.

The fact that there was a common code of service standard strictly enforced by the society had two great advantages. On the one hand it made it easier for the Indian members of the society to resist temptation and pressure, and on the other hand it made it easier to say no. Saying no is not always easy because at times one has to be quite ruthless and hurt the feelings of those who are not conscious of doing anything wrong, as I was to discover one morning round about Christmas time in Bombay. The door bell rang and our six-year-old son dashed to open it. He came back to the drawing room to announce quite breathless 'Father Christmas is home!' I went to see. In the doorway stood a tall bearded Muslim laden like a tree with gaily wrapped parcels, an entire bunch of colourful balloons and a large rocking horse. Behind him stood two coolies carrying a very heavy crate. He walked in, salaamed me, handed the balloons to our son and introduced himself before I could say that I was not going to buy anything. His name did not convey any message to me, but he insisted that he knew my husband and that all these things were presents for the Baba and the Mensahab. The coolies opened the crate which was filled with expensive tinned foods,

imported mushrooms and asparagus, pâté de foie gras, cheeses and chocolates. The rocking horse alone must have cost hundreds of rupees for it was foreign made and covered with the hide of a real foal. I thanked him politely and said that I could not accept presents so that he would have to take all this back. He insisted that we must keep them; he had bought all this specially for Baba and me, as a token of his respect for Zinkin Sahib. At this point I realized that he must be some shopkeeper or wholesaler wanting something from Maurice. I told him that I was under strict orders not to accept anything or to talk to business people and that Zinkin Sahib would be very cross to find that he had come to our house. As he went on insisting I suggested that he take all his gifts to the office and leave them with Zinkin Sahib in person; only when I threatened to ring my husband did he call back his coolies and walked away with his gifts. John was in tears. He had fallen in love with the rocking horse. 'Why can't we keep the rocking horse?' He said it was a present, he said he did not want anything for it. I tried to explain that the man wanted something from Daddy and that he would expect a reward—that people do not give expensive presents for nothing—but John was adamant. 'You should have kept the rocking horse and the tins, and then Daddy should have done nothing for him just the same; *that* would have taught him a lesson after he had spent all this money.' 'Go and explain to a six year old the finer points of ethics.' And those points can never be too fine; it is not enough to be honest, one has to be known and seen to be honest.

For instance in business circles, as distinct from Government, there is a custom by which one is allowed to accept Christmas hampers from dealers. These hampers are very expensive, they sometimes contain in addition to expensive fruit and imported chocolates and biscuits and even a whole turkey. The habit was, not to keep these hampers for oneself but to send them on to hospitals and orphanages. I never felt happy about this custom. How was the dealer to know you had not kept the hamper for yourself? I always insisted that he send it to the hospital or the orphanage of his own choice, in his and our joint names; whether he did so or returned it to the shop was his own business.

The reason for this fastidiousness, which may seem excessive,

is that there is in the Indian tradition, as indeed in most Asian traditions, the custom of *Nazarana*. *Nazarana* is the gift which is due to people in high position as a token of respect; *Nazarana* does of course build up a cobweb of obligations, but the obligations are not crudely related to *Nazarana*, they merely crop up later. The custom of *Nazarana* is so widespread that even the relatives of leading Congress politicians have been known to let Maharajahs and well-to-do businessmen pay their bills. I have even known the sister of one very leading politician suggest to her rich friends the presents she wanted them to send for her daughter's wedding. Had she been a civil servant's sister, he would of course have been in trouble.

Gandhi with his unerring eye for essentials had seen the danger. That is why he had been so flush with his own family whenever they were not overstocked with money. On one occasion when Kasturba was compensated on her shawl five rupees which belonged to the Ashram, he attacked her at a meeting for misappropriating Ashram funds and forced the poor woman to return the money there in front of the public. And when his favourite son Manilal who was treasurer of the Ashram lent some of the Ashram's money to his elder brother who was in financial difficulties Gandhi made a public statement. He said such a loan was unacceptable since no permission had been sought from the members of the Ashram and it was therefore tantamount to embezzlement. To make an all India example of the way in which money in trust must be treated and to impress on all that honesty began there, Gandhi gave the unfortunate Manilal the choice between watching his father undertake a 21-day self-punishment fast at the risk of his life, or go on voluntary exile to South Africa for the rest of his life. Manilal chose to exile himself from India forever.

I used to think Gandhi's ultimatum preposterous until I began to watch the subtle ways in which corruption can creep into any society, especially if it is poor, and has traditions which put duty to kin before duty to the State and where old loyalties and obligation are regarded as binding on people.

The Imperial Services and organized industry operated at a level of integrity probably higher than in Britain; however there were the odd black sheep. There was for instance one notorious Vicerineal out whom stories are told in India to this

day. This particular Vicereine used to collect pearls, among other things. She was of course the wife of a politician. 'It was more than a hobby with her,' sighed Sir Bhagchand Soni, a very rich Jain merchant who was the Chairman of the Municipality of Ajmer when I stayed there in 1946 as his guest, with my friend Professor Stella Kramrisch. Sir Bhagchand was himself a collector of pearls—he owned a historic thirteen string necklace which he wore on those state occasions when he did not don his 3,000 carat three-tiered emerald necklace. 'Her Excellency had heard of my necklaces; after all they are well known all over India; one is insured for a million pounds and the other for three quarters of a million. So Her Excellency invited herself to come and stay with me at Ajmer. I was Chairman of the Municipality then also. She had heard that I had built a private guest house for my friends, the one you are staying in now, and expressed the desire to see it. Her Excellency was quite shameless; her collecting pearls was not a hobby, it was a profession, a way of putting money aside for a rainy day; and she was quite a connoisseur in pearls.

'She had a way of telling you that she would consider accepting this necklace or that pearl as a souvenir which made it quite impossible not to hand it over. After all she was the Vicereine; her wishes were considered to be commands, and she did not hide the fact that she meant to use it in return. You see, I had been stupid. I had gone to Delhi to a reception at Viceroy's House wearing the family pearl necklace. It had fourteen strings, all the strings are perfectly matched and the pearls are all hazel-nut size. Now, as you can see,' our host opened a velvet case the size of a tray and showed us a cascade of perfect pearls held together by two admirable diamond clips made by Cartier, 'there are only thirteen strings left. After much haggling I managed to get her to accept the smallest, the first string; she of course wanted the fourteenth; that woman was a terror! Who says corruption is an Indian prerogative?' I forgot to ask my host whether he got his knighthood for the pearls or for his contribution to the war effort.

Before Independence the lower services were as bad as now. First of all there was the quite traditional, admitted yet incurable, corruption of the lower rungs of the police. I remember the policeman at the bottom of Kingsway, in full view of the Imperial

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Secretariat, levying his bribes from tonga drivers; or the policemen in Calcutta who candidly gave you the choice between a 'backsheesh' or a 'ticket' for parking your car where you should not. And there was the classic story of the Punjab Sessions Judge who used to take an identical amount of money from both parties in every case he had to judge, he faithfully returned every anna to the losing side. The police, the customs, the public works department, and during and after the war the ministry of civil supplies, were notorious. So were the irrigation and the subordinate medical services.

In the hospitals drugs, particularly pain-killers and the then very new and expensive anti-biotics, tended to find their way into the black market. I once spent a night of sheer agony at the Quetta general hospital because the morphine injection which had been prescribed for me had been changed by the nurse, who was not Indian, to a aspirin tablet. When I complained to the doctor in the morning, he apologetically confessed that he was helpless, his staff would insist on selling narcotics in the bazaar and there was nothing I could do about it. The post office too was not honest. Indeed so notorious was the tendency of postal clerks to keep the stamps for resale that letters with high denomination stamps which could not be posted personally and defaced in front of one used to be sent to the post office with a certificate of posting which the post office supplied free and which the clerk filled in at the counter as a guarantee that the letter would be sent. It must be remembered that an annual stamp to the United States for example might if the letter was at all heavy, be the equivalent of a day's wage of the postal clerk. With very low wages, with the cost of living always going up and wage increases never keeping pace, the wonder was not that there was some corruption but that there was not more.

The Public Works Department was notorious also and so were building contractors, some of whom were nevertheless knighted for their contributions to the war effort. I visited two houses in New Delhi which had been built and fully equipped with rationed materials and equipment by one well known contractor who had rented them to foreigners for handsome amounts.

The war with its trail of shortages, controls and temporary civil servants brought about a sharp decline in standards at least in the middle rungs of the administration. I have myself seen the

bathrooms of temporary members of the Ministry of Civil Supplies stacked to the ceiling with crates of whisky at a time when whisky was informally rationed to one bottle per customer per month and cost fifty rupees on the open and ninety-rupees per bottle on the black market.

Young men coming out were told under no circumstances to foul their own backyard. If, as bachelors sometimes do, they had to have mistresses they were to find them outside their own jurisdiction, officials have been known to have been transferred for taking a mistress from the district in which they were working. Thus very strict rule about not playing around in one's jurisdiction was in sharp contrast with the way in which young men in tea-gardens were allowed to find a mistress from among their tea-pluckers. Tea-garden managers have no real power, they can therefore be promiscuous without damage to the country. Judged by Indian experience of the way in which corruption works among people with power Profumo should have been made to resign even if he had told Parliament the truth about his liaison with Christine Keeler, because those with power cannot afford to keep bad company. This rule becomes even more vital when there are, as there were in India, many controls—as the story of Karen will show.

Karen, a pretty Anglo-Burmese, landed in Bombay after the fall of Burma with nothing but her looks, wits and her easy virtue to fall back upon. In no time she became the mistress of a sea Captain, a sailor and a civil servant. Karen was no fool. She was quick to realise that the law put in her way something far more profitable than male and government controls. She became the mistress of a fairly senior import licensing officer of the Government of India. This was a far afield in money concerned, not a mercenary relationship at all. He did not have to keep her—by then Karen had made enough to have her own flat and she never asked him for anything except his affection. Bung in love he thought, naturally, that she was in love too. All he did for her, beside sending occasional flowers, was to take her to a quiet little restaurant where he knew that his wife would not find them. Karen, however, was careful to be seen with him often enough in the sort of places where no scandal would be caused but where men, particularly business men, would see them together. As soon as the word had gone round the right

quarters that Karen was his mistress money began to pour painlessly into her bank account. Hers was a very straightforward racket. She would seek out businessmen wanting licences. As the war was on, practically everything was licensed. Getting a licence was worth a great deal to them and they were only too glad to pay a commission. 'If you get your licence,' Karen would say, very businesslike, 'you give me 5%. If I fail to get you the licence, you do not have to give me anything. All you will have to do is to send your application into my friend's office through the proper channels and once you have done this, let me know, and I shall speak to him in your favour.' There is no evidence that Karen ever spoke to her friend, but other things being equal, one time out of every three or four the licence was granted and Karen got her commission. As soon as she became really well-off she dropped her licensing office to become the mistress of an Indian Minister who was not only very rich but also sufficiently brazen to take her to the Delhi Gymkhana Club on the nights his wife was not present. I remember watching Karen dance with one of the Viceroy's aides-de-camp, a spray of diamond flowers around her elegantly on her black bun. Since the Minister was a Hindu old I have no doubt that, besides social ambitions, he had his racket up her sleeve, perhaps she wanted to become respectable and marry an army officer who would take her to Britain and ask few questions about her past.

AFTER INDEPENDENCE

THE strain on administrators and politicians to be honest was greatly increased by the advent of independence. First of all controls and government interference in various spheres of life increased. Most important too, politicians were for the first time in a position to be nepotist or dishonest as well as to exercise pressures on the administration. In short there was more scope for corruption than there had been under the British when all that the Indian politicians had to offer was going to jail.

Nevertheless India after independence compared very favourably not only with other Eastern countries or Latin America,

but even with the Soviet Union if what *Pravda* had to say about Blat was true.

The administration at the lower levels remained as corrupt as it had been; policemen continued to take their rake-off to allow taxis and tongas to ply; and as far as I was able to find out — and this is not an investigation one can conduct scientifically — their rake-off had if anything failed to keep up with the rise in the cost of living, except of course where bribes were given in kind. In Orissa one still saw villagers going sheepishly to the police station, chicken in hand.

Corruption at the higher levels of the administration was rare. Before independence there had been a certain member of the Indian Civil Service who had embezzled a large sum of money and caused a great deal of scandal by the way in which he had built blocks of flats for himself with his ill gotten gains. All that had happened to him was that he was sacked and that his property was impounded. Since Independence rumours of corruption against a member of the Indian Civil or Administrative Services lead to a Judicial Inquiry which is conducted with great fanfare and the accused if found guilty is sent to jail. There was the case of Venkataraman, the Secretary of the Ministry of Industry who was found guilty of peccadillos like allowing somebody to buy cooking pots for his wife and a pair of spectacles and an air conditioned railway ticket from Bombay to Delhi for himself. Popular belief had it that Venkataraman's misdeeds were far more serious: he had built an expensive house in Madras, he had given a lavish reception for his daughter's wedding and he was said to have a numbered bank account in Switzerland. There was no evidence for anything wrong in the house or the wedding and no evidence for the bank accounts at all. For the peccadillos that were proved he was sentenced to three years' imprisonment. When Venkataraman appealed to the Supreme Court his sentence was increased from three to seven years, so great was the feeling that administrators must be honest, especially if they belonged to the Indian Civil Service.

The pressure on the administrator since independence has been enormous. His pay was fixed in the 1920s and has not been raised since, meanwhile inflation, voluntary cuts and the world's highest taxes have reduced its real value to perhaps a fifth of what it was in 1939. Yet his needs have not diminished corre-

pondingly. He still wants to educate his children properly, which is not cheap, and he may want to send them abroad for further studies. He still needs a car and a servant; he may even continue to entertain in a modest way. Under such circumstances it is a miracle that so many people remain honest in the face of the temptations to which they are submitted in an ever increasingly controlled economy.

The Indian Civil Service, and its successors the Indian Administrative and Foreign Services (who are still worse paid), continue on the whole to behave with the old incorruptibility well exemplified by the story once told us by our old friend Kewal Mathrani. He had a rickety old car which needed new tyres; he procrastinated, since tyres are expensive. Finally, his wife persuaded him to act, but before he could do so, he discovered that there was a fifty rupee tax on each tyre in the new Budget. He was Finance Secretary and had acquired the information in his official capacity. So he felt himself bound to wait till after the Budget to buy his tyres, at a cost to himself of 250 rupees. Such behaviour is quite frequent among civil servants; one would not of course expect it of more than a handful of politicians (Congress or Communist) though there were men like the late Vakhunt Mehta, a true Gandhian, who was Finance Minister in Bombay and who continued, even after he retired from active politics, to carry honesty so far that he always put a new stamp when he readdressed a letter. But such honesty would be considered eccentric anywhere.

The Civil Service continued to be honest. The irrigation engineers and the police continued in their old ways.

I really learnt about irrigation engineers' standards in North India--which is, it must always be remembered incomparably worse than peninsular India--during the serious floods of 1956 in the Punjab. The *Guardian* had sent me to write about the conditions of the people who had suffered. By the time I reached Amritsar Gulzarilal Nanda, who was then the Minister for Irrigation and Power, was already there. He too was touring the affected areas. Quite naturally he invited me to join his party and for the next three days we travelled in the same motorcade. Nanda was in a closed car in front. I followed in an open jeep filled with senior members of the Irrigation Department of the Punjab. They spoke Punjabi and Hindi and, thinking that I

could not follow, talked quite freely about what was happening at the Bhakra Nangal site. I learnt from them the ways by which one takes out of the stores depot equipment which is then reported lost on the way to the site, I learnt from them how one takes a cut from the contractor in order to certify that he has removed much more earth than he actually has, I learnt from them how one gets offered expensive presents ranging from a refrigerator to an air-conditioner, from a car to a cheque deposited in a Swiss bank, as reward for leaking information of competitors' tender. They kept laughing and swapping stories in an escalation of bribe taking. Some of the bribes were subtle indeed, like a wedding present which might take the shape not of an ornament but of paying for the entire reception. Not all the stories I heard during these three days were discreditable, and I heard many stories for the irrigation engineers in my jeep kept changing, as we moved along the flooded canals, and some of the stories I heard were doubtless for effect.

It all reminded me of the story told me by a senior finance official of the Government in the U.P. Public Works Department. This person refused to certify that more earth had been moved than was true, he also refused to accept bribes from various contractors even when he was pressed to do so by colleagues in his department. Before long this black sheep was tried for corruption, found guilty and sacked. All the people in whose way his honesty had stood had conspired to plant evidence against him, complete down to marked notes.

During these three days I also discovered that Nanda was very popular with the Irrigation Department because he was such an impractical, well meaning and woolly headed man. Nobody was afraid of him although everybody knew that he was rigorously honest. The extent to which Mr. Nanda is somewhat impractical is perhaps best shown by the way he behaved each time our motorcade came to a halt. He would show consternation at the way I was covered in dust from head to foot—I was in the jeep which immediately followed his limousine—and each time he would say, 'But this is terrible Mrs. Zinkin, you are all covered in dust. *Something* must be done about it. You cannot travel like this.' It never occurred to him that the solution was simple, he could ask me to join him in his car which was half empty instead of letting me go on in an open jeep. I did not

however suggest this because I was learning too many fascinating things from my jeep companions.

If most administrators in India remain honest and try to make both ends meet by drawing on their provident fund or selling their inherited property, or by renting the house they have built for their old age, the politicians solve the problems of inflation and high taxation by giving themselves the worst of both worlds. They all too often behave in a way which discredits them with the public without really bringing them in any money or even being truly dishonest.

Because of Gandhi's insistence on austerity and because of the decision they took in 1957 that Ministers would be content with £450 a year, they have condemned themselves to a life of hypocrisy and low pay. The Prime Minister of India gets £1,440 a year, Union Ministers £625 and Ministers in the States often do get just the £450 even. In a Union, however, they all get a free house, free electricity, free air-conditioners, free water, free messengers whom they use as personal servants, a free gardener, a free telephone, a free car, free furniture of their own choice. To live as junior Ministers do in Delhi, or as the State Ministers do in cities like Bombay or Calcutta would require an income of at least £5,000 before tax a year. The taxpayer is not fooled. There is perpetual criticism of ministerial hypocrisy, and often with good cause. There was for instance the young Congress socialist member who was on becoming a very junior State Minister left his comfortable rent-controlled flat which he at once sub-let it in to move into a free ministerial house. He also insisted on keeping the garden floodlit at night against burglars who had been so careful not to waste his own electricity in Bombay electricity was highly taxed).

It must however be said in the ministers' defence that everybody who is in Government service in India is housed by Government for 10% of his pay and if Ministers' houses are at times little, or big, white elephants it is the British who are to be blamed—they built them for the members of the Service. What Ministers should do, now that India is independent, is to sell the houses and provide more democratic accommodation for themselves and pay 10% of their salary in rent. The cars may be too big but cars are necessary to ministerial functions unless it be decided that in Indian circumstances bicycles are more appro-

priate. However the cars should not be allotted to the Ministers, they should be pooled to avoid their being used to take the children to school, the wives visiting and the servants to market. The telephone too is part of the working equipment of a Minister. What can be counted as self-indulgence are the air-conditioners and the free electricity and water, but against that one must offset the very inadequate pay which hits the Minister and his family in how they live—as distinct from where they live—in what they eat and what they wear and what they can afford for education and holidays. It would be far better for the pay to be larger and the house smaller. A large house can be a nuisance to maintain with a reduced staff. The low salary, on the other hand, greatly increases the temptations of the men who wield power to accept hospitality from those who have something to be gained by being seen with ministers, let alone from being favoured by them. Thus the Chief Minister of Bombay went to Yugoslavia with his whole family, at the invitation of an Indian shipping magnate for the launching of a ship, hotels by the Indian sea-side or the hill are either non-existent or expensive. Ministers and their families too often accept the hospitality of big businessmen. This does neither politics nor industry any good in the public mind though the minister is doing no more than is common practice in Europe or America.

One of the reasons to which the public object so much to ministerial houses and cars is that for years the Congress Party has been lecturing the country about the need for sacrifices, simplicity and renunciation. The worst example of this was Nehru himself. He harped constantly on the need to live simply, and chose for himself the most luxurious of all the residences the British built in Delhi—the residence of the Commander-in-Chief—which with its spacious grounds and comfortable rooms, was far more habitable than the gigantic Viceregal mausoleum. Mr Shastri, on becoming Prime Minister, stayed in the house he had been occupying as Home Minister.

So long as Indian politicians were in opposition they had nothing to distribute or to offer—all they could look forward to were lathi charges for themselves and hardships for their friends. All this changed overnight with independence when they became the rulers.

So many freedom fighters, and still more their families, had

been kept by businessmen while they were in jail. And businessmen may not be the most suitable people to be grateful to once one is in office — Sir Padampat Singhamia had helped many Congressmen. Thus, when Congress first came to power in 1947, I learnt that he used to send a bag of sugar to the Nehrus every month; he had been doing it for years. Indeed, for their holidays the Nehrus used to stay in Mussoorie in the Singhamia guest-house. So long as Nehru was in jail it was perfectly normal for him to accept these gifts from a man who was knighted by the British for his contributions to the War Effort and had nothing to gain and something to lose by helping the rebels. But once Nehru became Prime Minister it became less reasonable, for Sir Padampat's reputation was not of the highest. Yet it is not easy to cut off relations the minute one comes to power with someone who has helped during the dark days.

This debt of gratitude poses a dilemma which can be almost insoluble as Purshottam Das Tandon once explained to me.

Purshottam Das Tandon was an old and very eccentric Gandhian whose eccentricities were sufficiently extreme to be worth a paper thesis. He campaigned against anything that was mill or factory made including artificial manure and that honey must be left to the bees that it is immoral for men to steal honey from beehives. He opposed taking milk away from calves or ewes to give it to man, being a good Hindu he was of course a strict vegetarian and only used leather rather than that which was made out of the hide of cattle which due to a natural death. This was the more remarkable because in his student days he had been captain of his college's cricket team and the team had had to provide balls coated with *thm a leather*.

At the time I interviewed him Purshottam Das Tandon was President of the Indian National Congress and Nehru was conducting a bitter campaign to oust him. Nehru's objection to him, however, was what he considered to be the old man's obscurantism. There was no breath of a suggestion against his honesty. Nevertheless, two days previously he had been to lunch with Sir Padampat Singhamia (although he was then under investigation for various black market offences) at a party to which everybody, and particularly the press, had been invited. I asked him why he had gone, when his going could be interpreted as an attempt to influence the investigations. Pulling the

hair of his beard, Purshottam Das Tandon said, 'What am I to do? I ask you? It so happens that Padampat is an old friend of my family. I have known him all my life. When I went to jail against the British he supported my wife and the family; and when I did not earn anything because I was too busy with politics he helped me financially. He had nothing to gain from this, mind you, there was nothing I could have done for him even if I had wanted to in those days. All he got was the C.I.D. on his tail. And now I have never done him a favour. I have never stretched a case for him since I have been in a position to do so. But now that he is in trouble am I to turn against an old friend? And why should I be more squeamish about the money he has, now that I am Congress President than I was when I was a jailbird? Is it not enough that he should be investigated for what he has done, for evading taxes? Am I, at my age, to snub a friend?' Gandhi, I almost answered, would have said 'Yes', but I was prevented from saying this because it suddenly crossed my mind that Gandhi always stayed in Birla's house—he was murdered in Birla House in Delhi—and that he was open to criticism for accepting private hospitality in this way.

The habits Congressmen formed of relying upon their patrons before Independence are reinforced by the nature of the Indian countryside, a countryside which is not sufficiently developed for travelling to be comfortable without making heavy calls upon local hospitality, hospitality which can usually only be provided by the better off—usually the landlords. Thus, when I spent a few days in the city of Jaisalmer in the heart of summer, I would have collapsed earlier with heat stroke had it not been for the thermos filled with ice which the Maharajah kindly sent me at regular intervals, there were only two sources of ice in the whole city of Jaisalmer, the hospital and the palace refrigerators. One can soon become truly indebted to those who are always there to provide one with the elementary comforts one can buy in the developed world but which have to be bestowed upon one in the underdeveloped world.

These stories will make clear the significance of Mr G. D. Birla and the reason why he comes into every conversation on business, politicians, the rich or influence.

Congress politicians have made it such a habit over the years of staying with Birla that he practically runs for them a guest

house in every big city and employs a whole staff to cater for his guests. I remember the All India Congress Party Conference which was held in Amritsar at which, except for a few Chief Ministers of States who stayed in the camp, and Nehru who stayed in the Inspection Bungalow, the Central Ministers stayed at Birla House. They also returned to Delhi by cars provided by Birla and others though they had made bookings in the air-conditioned railway carriages specially added to the Frontier Mail. I had come specially from Bombay to Amritsar to attend the conference and I had a return ticket for the air-conditioned coach. Normally there is only one air-conditioned carriage between Amritsar and Delhi. When I went to the station to reserve my berth the book-keeper showed me the reservation list. Because the conference had been held at Amritsar and to go back there were no less than four air-conditioned coaches but there was not a single berth left there. They were all reserved, as far as Delhi by Ministers. Chief Ministers had reserved for themselves while four berths reserved for them were entitled to, junior Ministers had reserved the whole coaches. I tried to argue that since I was coming from Bombay I ought to be given priority over passengers who were already in Delhi but no use. The clerk offered me a ticket in the second class. This did not suit me, for in the first non-air-conditioned class. I then went into the air-conditioned carriage and he once again tried to convince me with me, after all I had paid for my ticket. We were travelling on free passes to which I had a special right but he refused something. Moreover I could not see how other Ministers could not share, for one night in a four-berth coach. The clerk was far too scared of the Minister to make his list to me. Finally I demanded to be shown the list. The bookings were made in the name of each Minister. I put the name of one very junior Minister whom I knew particularly well and told the clerk that he was a great friend of mine and that I knew that he would not object to my sharing his coupe as far as Delhi was concerned. It happened to be the one going straight through to Bombay. The poor clerk was in a quandary, so I suggested that the Minister objected I would travel first class as far as Delhi and then shift into the air-conditioned. He finally agreed. I had spoken with such authority that I suspect he thought that the Minister and I were more than mere friends, and that I would get into trouble for keeping me

out. On the day of departure I arrived early at the station in order to reassure the clerk. We waited until the train was almost due to leave and, except for Kamaraj Nadar and one of his colleagues, there was not one single Minister to be seen. The train was delayed in case they were late and still no sign. Finally the train left thirty minutes late.

In the four air-conditioned carriages there were precisely four persons. Kamaraj Nadar, then Chief Minister of Madras, his alter ego, Bhaktavatsalam, the present Chief Minister, myself and one man. The man turned out to be Birla's guest house manager who, task finished, was going back to Delhi to look after other Ministers and who perhaps to swell his importance in my eyes, told me in great detail how he had sent a staff of thirty to cater for the Congress Ministers in Amritsar and how upon crates of expensive fruit and foods had been sent crates 'Only the very best is Birla's motto, only the very best.

Yet Birla has done a great deal for India. He has been ready to be a pioneer in industry and he does give a great deal of money to various charities. He has even created a University township at Pdani, his native village in Rajasthan.

One of the reasons for which the Indian public is so ready to believe the worst of its politicians comes from this way of travelling. My experience in the air-conditioned train in Amritsar is in no way exceptional. On another occasion I was travelling from Poona to Belgium on my way to Goa and I was carrying a great deal of money with me as there were no banking arrangements between India and Goa at the time of the Goan blockade. I had reserved a berth in the air-conditioned part of the first-class carriage. To my irritation I discovered that Mr Datar, the Deputy Home Minister, was also travelling on the same train and that he had commandeered the entire air-conditioned accommodation for himself and suite. I was afraid of travelling in the first class with so much money on myself as there had been frequent instances of train robberies. I explained my predicament to the station master whose sympathy was wholly with me. The Deputy Minister, he informed me, had travelling with him on a long tour round India, besides his wife and children who went free since he was entitled to a four berth compartment to himself, his secretary, his typist, his bodyguard, one messenger, his personal servant and believe it or not, by courtesy of the

Delhi station master, a railway waiter who had been attached to the Minister for the entire six weeks so that there should always be the same familiar face bringing the Minister refreshments at the various stops! The station master suggested that the safest place for me would be the first-class carriage also commandeered by Datar for the spill over of his suite, and he offered to say a word to that effect to the private secretary, who readily agreed. The bodyguard who had to jump to the platform at each stop in order to stand guard by the ministerial window had planned to travel sitting down and so had the Minister's personal servant who could be called at every stop. The Minister's typist and I took the top berth, the secretary lay on the lower berth, while the bodyguard and the personal servant half stretched on the lower berth. The railway waiter, being a nobody anyway, squatted on the floor, the personal servant was far too high by caste and status to allow him to sit on the same berth. We chatted a lot during that journey and my opinion of the Minister did not go up. I was hooked by the way his entire staff feared him and by the meticulous care he displayed both for their comforts and for the general public. It was not election time and so he did not bother to receive the people who had come at various stops with petitions. I came down shortly before Nehru and when I returned to India the Government was investigating the rumour that he had left £7,50,000, which for a man who began his political career with nothing much, was not negligible.

Ministers travelling have indeed inherited the worst of the old Viceregal disregard for the common man, as anybody who travels a great deal in India discovers at his expense time and again. Usually, if one travels to less developed places where there are no hotels, one books a Government provided bungalow. This is done in good time through the relevant channels, and one's name is put up on the booking list so that when one arrives all one has to do is to identify oneself with the chowkidar and he lets one in. Often, however, Maurice and I had to drive on for miles and miles because the bungalow which we had reserved had been subsequently booked for some minister who did not even turn up. In some areas, if the Minister is on tour, all the bungalows are booked, just in case he turns up in one of them. I remember arriving at Kalahandi in the wilds of Orissa to find that the Chief Minister had reserved the bungalow; the

watchman would not let us in. 'We will vacate the moment the Chief Minister arrives,' I pleaded. The watchman would not hear of it. 'The Chief Minister is already here, as a matter of fact he is staying with the Maharajah, but the booking in his name stands' It so happened that the Chief Minister, Hare Krishna Mahtab, was a friend of mine for he had been Governor of Bombay, and so I went to the Palace and asked him to release the dak bungalow in our favour which he did at once and, being a most hospitable man, he also insisted that for the duration of our stay we take all our meals at the Palace. And, to be fair to Hare Krishna Mahtab he did not even know that that bungalow, let alone all the bungalows in the region had been booked for him the bookings were entirely due to the inordinate zeal of some junior official who did not want to run the risk of his Chief Minister being stranded at night.

But it is over jobs for Indians that there is the greatest public resentment in India. The non-Indians sometimes seem to the public to claim for share of job in the administration, the defence service and in the army. This suspicion is on the whole, unjust. The non-Indians are mostly by influence, but normally they are better jobs because they are the best qualified people. They come from the best of modern homes, have modern mind and for all of this their function is more important when it comes to recruitment. In the fact that they are related to some officials who may be a little overpaid and gone tomorrow. The suspicion is more often a trick of the tongue of politicians some of whom, without intention would be anywhere. But here again one must understand the politician's point of view. If his son is unqualified it is often because the father was in jail for his country when his son was young. The father's dilemma has been admirably put by Sri Prasad in the Independence issue of the *Illustrated Weekly of India* in 1936. Sri Prasad is a friend of Nehru who had been Minister in Delhi and ended his career as Governor of Bombay. He began by telling his readers that he would devote the article to the memory of his late son. The boy's mother died when he was eighteen months old and for much of the crucial time of his growing up Sri Prakasa had been in jail.

The young boy had not much of a chance of a proper education there was intense ferment all over the country, and young boys at

school and young men at college were alike affected . I am sorry and ashamed to confess that it was only in 1945 that I suddenly woke up to a sense of my duties by my family, and a sad realization that I had very badly neglected them . It was all too late . This must have been the case with innumerable others, who like me, had joined the Cause . When Swaraj at last came in 1947 many who had been in public life came to occupy offices of Governors, Ministers and others . I was faced by innumerable questions that I had not been able to answer . It must be noted that almost all these who took office at that time were persons who had been brought up in the pre-Gandhian era in the conventional educational and other institutions of the time . Many of them had all the advantages like myself, of a foreign education .

My son's criticisms were . I've often pretend to be such an honest bloke to follow the mandate of Gandhi, and Congress, and deprive your children of proper education . You have all done well yourselves . I have left in the lurch . How have those suffered who demanded to carry the mandates of the Congress and joined the service of the British . The centre where they were and many, in fact, neglected them . For the people had the best of both worlds . They studied their course in the conventional universities and then returned to India and then children also have their own criticisms to level at them . When I said "It was no use telling him that in fact I was after my great Cause, and that with the advent of Swaraj his own children in turn could get what was denied him . It was no use saying that if all the old personnel were utterly dismissed there would be chaos . He would not be satisfied . People are coming in like a locust and in his early twenties and in many instances older than him he had known well, as my son might have said .

The question went round . I never gave a satisfactory answer, and on Independence Day the day will attract attention "Was it right for the great leader of the day to utilize students in their political agitation and interfere with their studies . Was it proper for those who followed the leader to be left in the lurch when Swaraj came while those who had defied their mandates and entered into office remained securely there . Was it proper for any person with family responsibilities especially of motherless young children—to neglect them and plunge into public agitation not even sure if he was only amusing himself or was really working for any great cause?"

According to the article the way Sri Prakasa solved the problem of finding his son a job was to ask the Minister for Civil

Aviation to help him become a pilot. 'It was not easy for anyone to get an entrance in the training institutions . . . however Rafi (the Minister) had a way of doing things, and was invariably successful. He managed to get my son in.' In Britain the old boy net is used in much the same way—one has only to think of the City—but there is less talk of nepotism than there is in India because the pressure to find a job is less acute than it is in India and because many of the jobs where the old boy net operates either require the sort of skill the applicants have or, like so many in Britain, are filled by amateurs anyway.

Sri Prakasa managed to get his son into an airline as a pilot; there was nothing reprehensible about that. But other Congress stalwarts have been less modest in their paternal ambitions. The three worst cases that have so far come to light are those of Pandit Shukla, Pratap Singh Karon and Bikshi Ghulam Mahomed.

Pandit Shukla who was Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh for nearly ten years had many sons and by the time he died they were worth millions. When questions were asked in the Assembly about their sprawling fortunes, mostly acquired from Government contracts and mineral lease, the Chief Minister brazenly told the House: 'Ministers have sons and they must live.' Nehru stood by Pandit Shukla until his death.

Next there was the notorious case of Pratap Singh Karon who was for many years Chief Minister of the Punjab and of all the Chief Ministers Nehru's very special favourite. For years all India was aghast at the imputations with which Pratap Singh Karon remained Chief Minister despite the structures passed against him in the courts and the blatant manner in which he used office to promote the welfare of his own family. Eventually, much against Nehru's wishes, the President of India appointed a Commission under S. R. Das, a retired Chief Justice of India, to look into the charges against the Chief Minister. The findings were incomplete since few witnesses dared come forward to testify against a Chief Minister widely suspected of dealing effectively with those who got in his way. Many believed that he had not stopped at murder. This may not have been true, but the belief is intimidating for a witness. Incomplete as the findings therefore were, they were immensely damaging. Pratap Singh had to resign and was murdered in an ambush shortly afterwards.

The third notorious case under investigation was that of Bakshi Ghulam Mahomed, the Prime Minister of Kashmir, who was accused of helping and abetting his four brothers during the ten years of his tenure of office. These four brothers made so much money out of Government contracts and their connection with the Prime Minister that Kashmir was nicknamed throughout India the 'B.B.C.' which stands for Bakshi Brothers Corporation. It must, however, be said that Bakshi makes quite an effective case in his defence. Most of the contracts were Indian Army Contracts, which he did not control; and there is no doubt that his brothers are very efficient contractors.

All these three were protégés of Nehru, untouchable so long as Nehru was in full power. The same was true too of Bijoo Patnaik, ex-Chief Minister of Orissa on whose conduct there have recently been severe condemnations in Parliament. It is not surprising therefore that there has been much criticism in India of Nehru for nepotism and patronage.

The accusations of nepotism are grossly exaggerated. There is a great deal of talent in the Nehru family. Thus B. K. Nehru, a first cousin twice removed and a leading member of the Indian Civil Service, is perhaps the most effective Ambassador India has ever had in the United States and he was a first class officer in the Finance Ministry before being sent to the United States. Mrs Indira Gandhi, Nehru's only child, was an excellent Congress President at a tricky time in Congress Affairs. However, not all the Nehrus are equally gifted and where their gifts are less obvious the criticisms are more vocal.

Moreover Nehru's loyalty used to extend indiscriminately to all the members of his household as well as to his friends. His patronage of Krishna Menon is too well known to require recall; it was Nehru who carried Krishna Menon through the jeep scandal, the whisky scandal, the blanket scandal while he was High Commissioner in London, and who backed him in all his playings with promotion in the Defence Ministry.

Nehru's patronage of M. O. Matthai, his private secretary — puzzled everybody. M. O. Matthai, who arrived to serve Nehru in 1947 penniless, flourished to such an extent that questions were asked in Parliament and an enquiry was ordered. However, in the event the scope of the enquiry was circumvented by Nehru's personal intervention. M. O. Matthai was forced to

retire by the pressure of public opinion when Nehru conceded during a very stormy press conference that he knew his secretary had been 'throwing his weight about'.

Nehru himself was absolutely honest, but he was incapable of distinguishing between honesty and dishonesty in others, or if he could, he refused to because he did not care. As a man he allowed his predilections to guide his judgement as a politician he would back those who, irrespective of their ethics, could win votes for the Congress, keep the Party together, or do the dirty jobs he did not want to do himself but which in any big political party have to be done if the same man is to remain Prime Minister for ever or even years. However, Nehru was not always to be blamed for his incapacity to clean up his entourage. Power isolates and it is not always easy to know whom to believe in a country where people are only too quick to believe the worst and where conditions are such as to lend themselves to abuses apparent or real by those in authority.

The four following cases are good examples of the difficulties in deciding what to believe. These are the cases of the sons of Pandit Pant, T. T. Krishnamachari, Morarji Desai and Lal Bahadur Shastri.

Pandit Golind Vallabh Pant, India's distinguished Home Minister, had a son who worked as a contact man. He conducted his business from the residence of the Home Minister and he was generally believed to be earning a salary far in excess of his qualifications. Whether the salary was too high is anybody's guess; whether it was paid by the firm in order to please the late Home Minister—as was frequently alleged—only the firm and the son of the Home Minister could confirm. Indeed, whether the Home Minister honestly believed his son to be worth that salary, only he himself could say. Whatever the facts for years, whenever I went to Delhi I heard of the scandal of Pandit Pant's son.

T. T. Krishnamachari founded a successful business in South India, 'T.T.K. & Son,' and his sons were his partners. When T.T.K. became Minister for Commerce and Industry he relinquished all interest in the firm, which he made over to his sons. After he had been in office a few years questions began to be asked in Parliament about how well 'T.T.K. & Sons' were doing. The Minister answered that from the moment of his becoming a Minister his standing instructions had been that any

matter relating to 'T.T.K. & Sons' should be referred to the Secretary of the Department and decided, on the Secretary's recommendation, by the Prime Minister himself. If any favouritism was shown to 'T.T.K. & Sons' and one cannot know unless one can go into every file—it was by the Secretary and the Prime Minister, not by the Minister, who never saw the files.

Morarji Desai was Chief Minister of Bombay when his son Kanthi, who like Sri Prakasa's son had grown up a victim of the Cause, began to earn his living as an insurance broker. Most people do not mind whom they insure through so long as the company is a good one. Very soon Kanthi was earning handsome commissions and people began to talk. They suspected business was given to him to placate his father, especially since like Pandit Pant's son, Kanthi Desai lived with his father. The rumour came to the ears of the Chief Minister who decided to take the bull by the horns. Every morning he would ask Kanthi whom he was going to cover that day and the moment Kanthi had left the Chief Minister would ring up the prospective client and assure him that it would not be held against him in the slightest if he turned Kanthi down. Indeed, Morarji Desai would go on to insist that only if his interlocuter's mind was absolutely clear that the connection between Kanthi and his father did in no way sway his decision in favour of taking out an insurance policy should he do so. People began to tough behind Morarji Desai's back and call him a hypocrite. 'He does this to bring pressure on people to insure through Kanthi and cover himself at the same time,' they would say. 'I heard this so many times and from such respectable sources that I took it upon myself to go and talk to Morarji Desai whom I knew well since Maurice had a great admiration for him even before Independence, while I had a considerable affection for him despite his faults.'

'It is true, I have been running up. But what am I to do? If I do not ring up people say my son is running on his connection with me. So I want to make it quite clear that there is no need to think that I will take any notice of whether or not people insure through him. I cannot say I forbid them to insure through him; they must remain free to do what they like. They should know me well enough to take heed at my word when I say I will not hold it against them. What should I do? Kanthi has to earn a living, he has no profession because he was not formally

educated; so he can only do business. I have already forbidden him from entering into the sort of business where being my son might be of help. From what you say I must now tell him to give up being an insurance broker. I am not going to disown him; he is my son. But he knows, I have already told him, that if he exploits my name and if I find out that he has been trading on my position, I shall resign. I cannot do more than that.' Shortly after this conversation Kanthi left insurance broking to go into licence getting for foreign firms. His father had by then become the Union Minister for Commerce and Industry. I have no doubt that the foreign firms, particularly the Italian ones, approached Kanthi on a commission basis because of his father; but I do know for a fact that the father never helped him, and that whatever commissions Kanthi got were earned, either because some junior official wanted to oblige or because, as in Karen's case, the firm deserved the licence on merit. Since everything in India is on licence Kanthi eventually made enough money to start a business of his own and when his father retired from Government in 1965, at the time of the Kamaraj Plan*, Kanthi retired from business to become his father's unpaid secretary. He may have been helped in this decision by the fact that his wife comes from a well-to-do and now respectable family as much as by the fact that, as he told me, he had made enough money to retire on. Motup Deo's case is typical of the dilemma which faces the first generation of Indian politicians in their relations with their children. The second generation is fortunate in that it has no such problem, when children were too young to respond to Gandhi's boycott and they are now going abroad for further education. They will not find it difficult to get jobs.

The son of Bhubai, an ex-Congress President, is quite happy as a supervisor with a small firm making cast iron pipes on a salary of 350 rupees a month and a house. He is married and his wife teaches; between the two of them they make both ends meet.

Lal Bahadur Shastri has a son who studied engineering and received training abroad. On his return to India he was offered a job at the modest salary of £ 150 a year with Ashok-Leylands

* The Kamaraj Plan provided that senior central ministers and chief ministers should resign to devote themselves to revitalising the Congress Party.

who run a truck factory in South India. At the time Shastri was Minister for Commerce and Industry. Ashok-Leylands are a most respectable firm. Nevertheless Shastri had doubts and before he allowed his son to accept the offer he consulted one of his trusted officials to make sure whether he ought not to insist that his son refuse the £450 and offer to join on £350 a year instead. 'Are you *sure* they are not offering him more because of me?' he kept asking anxiously, it took quite a long time to persuade him that £450 is not a large salary for a technician who has been trained abroad. It would have been no similar to the young man if his father had had his way. As a footnote to this case it is worth recounting that when Shastri came to London in 1964 and addressed the Federation of British Industries the Chairman of Leylands told me of the group of young officials that the Prime Minister's son was doing very well. The official at once warned him that under no circumstances should this be mentioned to the Prime Minister because he would feel so uncomfortable that he would have to discontinue his visit to Leylands to clear his own conscience.

So much for nepotism, then, believed. What about ministerial corruption?

Under Nehru there was the occasional rather minor, misdeemeanour at the Centre perhaps because of the blinkers he chose to wear while the Minister concerned was defrauding the American immigration authorities by taking in mistresses to the United Nations in various countries, or whether he was collecting money for election purposes from businessmen on a *quid pro quo* basis, or whether he simply got licenses for his relations, jobs for his caste fellows or for people from his part of the country. At the level of the States corruption was much greater in those States where Congress was either weak, as in Orissa, or new as in Rajasthan which, being part of ex-princely India, had a tradition of *na-azana* instead of the high standards of the Indian Civil Service.

Nazarana is the custom by which petitioners give a present to the Diwan in an attempt to ingratiate themselves with him. Many a princely court is studded with the palaces Diwans built for themselves out of *nazarana*. *Nazarana* was not a bribe in the sense that there was nothing stealthy about it, it was more like paying tribute to the overlord. And indeed there seems no

reasons for it was that the last Rana Prime Minister had refused to play the game and retire after he had netted his £7.5 million.

Ministerial and administrative corruption is vastly enhanced by the existence of controls. The more controls, the greater the scope for corruption. And for the purpose of corruption one must rank taxation amongst controls. Indeed, the avoidance of taxation—within the loopholes of the law—takes a great deal of the time and ingenuity of many an Indian businessman; and what he does which is not within the loopholes of the law, he alone knows.

The mentality of many of the *marwaris** who now control so much of Indian business was admirably set out for me not very long ago when one of India's leading businessmen boasted over dinner that every man has his price. 'With one it is fear of scandal because his wife collects pearls, like that Vicereine of yours; with another it is women. Do you know, Mrs Zinkin, that I have had in my hand a copy of the Indian Budget Proposals every year, whether the British ruled India or the Indians ruled India. I tell you, every man has his price. For some it is power, for others it is fear of poverty, for others it is helping a relation abroad with foreign exchange. The only man whose price I have not yet been able to discover is Shastri. The poor dope does not enjoy the good things of life, he has no skeleton in his cupboard, no weakness. Do you know that until his death, even when he was very ill, Nehru always walked me personally to my car. I had no respect for that man, he was a Great Moghul, with the standards of a Great Moghul, and like the Great Moghul his favourites and his relations were his price and his weakness. But let me tell you that the British are unnecessarily arrogant; they are no saints either. What about your Profumo? What about all the whitewash? Men are the same the world over, sinners!'

My host daintily dipped an asparagus in the butter sauce, beckoned to the head waiter of London's most select hotel and asked for a slice of toast. 'The Communists have no hesitation in opening bank accounts in Switzerland and living it up when nobody is there to watch. Show me a really honest man unless it be a man like Vinoba Bhave, our Walking Saint, or that fool, Jaya Prakash Narayan. Why even Gandhiji had double standards.

* A business caste from Marwar.

He lived in Birla House did he not? And he never asked Birla how he made his money because the money was handy. And even about non-violence he had double standards. Do you know that shortly before he was murdered he was walking in the garden with Bula (who told me that very evening) and suddenly Gandhi said, 'How is it that there are no planes flying over the garden on their way carrying troops to Kashmir today?' and then the Mahatma added with a grin, "fancy me, the apostle of non-violence being disturbed because there are no planes taking troops to Kashmir today, we really are a bundle of contradictions. If that is not double standards by another name I ask you what it is". The head waiter was handing round hot-house strawberries and I hear a waiter is my host continued to boast. For a man I have given money and I have bought everything I have wanted to buy. Sometimes it took longer to find the price that it was all. No wonder the young Indians at the Samadhi had to murder my host as one whose continued existence was a reminder of business to be respectable in India.

I quote the conversation between the two men. The one doubts the man was boasting. The other has a number of people he could not have no matter what price he offered to have argued they were not men of his social calibre. Take so many self-made men like W. D. Andrus, a self-declared miser, even about his evil nature, to occur to this reader as being bigger than his. But it is not to quote the very interesting remark of Professor Morris Jones, a very prominent scholar, elected from one set of social bonds, in yet another to new set. Many a corrupt financier in his private and impeccable private life, continues to be a total abstemious, returns to say his prayers regularly, gives much to charity in his home town, supports hospitals and scholarships for his own race, would never think of cheating his faithful God to whom he may give as much as ten percent of all his net earnings, yet he will do anything to cheat the momentary Sardar Pruskin used to say that G. D. Birla refused a knighthood but donated a great deal of money for institutions in his native State because he wanted the Maharajah to bestow upon the women of the Birla household the right to wear toe-rings—a sign of privilege which had far more meaning for him and his family than a foreign decoration.

And when one of the younger Birlas was discovered to be addicted to drink, racing, women and gambling, the family insisted on cutting him off, though this meant partitioning the family assets and giving him his share. On matters of personal behaviour the Birlas observe standards matched only by the Cadburys.

MILLER NIMRU'S DRAFT

‘Not any, just only 20 per cent’ alloted for construction 20 per cent should be only per cent specially pent . . . 50 per cent of the credit is to the black market. It goes there only through the black market and Gulzarilal Nanda for many years has been a member of the Planning Commission and now Hon. Minister goes to his constituency in 1963 on departmental duty. Year Plan and warning them not to put their feet in the fire. Year Plan. For the usual old story that Mr Nanda blamed ‘the conditions’ for the credit crunch and methods of working of business as a left of the finance authority. If this stupid film continue where I have to go, with what evil not collide. I am Hon. Minister was speaking like the leader of the Opposition.

Indians are people who wait for themselves and everybody else. They are often heart-broken off their sins and they never apply critical clock-stones of corruption before repenting themselves with no blushes as if they were gospel truth. Entering to Indians in a scandal is very much like listening to a sermon. At the time of the Profumo Affair I saw that the Indians like those who are not informed much up-jaw but they do not know. The flimsiest ground can be enough to start a row. I once met a young Indian who told me that the reason for which the Government of India had bought French *Mysteres* instead of British jet motor for the Air Force was that the Defence Secretary had a French mistress. Only after some time did it dawn upon me that it must have meant me. I had recently been staying with the Defence Secretary and his family.

and I was French before I married Maurice. On another occasion when we were expecting Sardar Panikkar to stay with us on his way back to Peking where he was India's Ambassador, he wrote from Delhi to ask if it would be all right for him to come just the same as he had been told by an 'eye-witness' that we had separated and were starting divorce proceedings. And there was the time when I was greeted by a fellow journalist in Delhi with warm surprise: he had been told that I had been deported from India and that Maurice had had to resign from his job because of an article I had written criticizing Nehru. Nobody in India is immune from loose slander and wagging imagination. And the demoralizing point is that nobody ever takes the trouble to check.

Thus, during my visit to the Government stockpiles, I was taken round by an official I had well known and admired who confessed with genuine sorrow that he and I had been shattered and that he was expected to die very soon. Getting quite emotional because of the Prime Minister's thatswine! That hypocrite! I thought that he had to attend all the meetings read all his books that never touched any of my books, that I would have laid my head down before him! And what has he turned out to be? A cheat, a liar, a double swine! He thought that when the Chinese attacked India he would appear at the nation my wife gave to the Defence of India Fund. All her gold ornaments, all her wedding jewels, and that I gave my gold cuff links which had belonged to my old married father. And to you know what Nehru, our beloved Prime Minister, our model our hero did? He made a stolen entrance and kept everything of value for his family that he could! This surprised me: it did not sound like Nehru. I expressed doubt and asked my guide why he said all this. He retorted that he had read Nehru's will in a Bengali newspaper, not just the excerpt of the will which had appeared in every newspaper in India but the entire will. In his will Nehru had stated that his mother's jewels should go to his two sisters while his wife's jewels should go to his daughter. 'This report has never been denied or challenged. How, I ask you, how can he have his family jewels to give away when he is supposed to have given all of them to the Defence of India Fund to set the nation an example?' I was profoundly shocked and tried to check the story. As I failed to get a copy of the Bengali

newspaper I asked Khushwant Singh's son—a trainee on the *Times of India*—to try and find me the relevant issue; he promised he would but failed. I asked a number of Indian friends if they had read the part in the will about the jewels; some seemed to remember a vague something, but not one of them seemed shocked and all of them more or less accepted the story as true, though not in character. It was in London that I finally got the answer. Nehru's will was written on the 21st June 1954 and had not been read. The Defence of India Fund was opened after the Chinese attack sometime in 1962. Rather than reserve judgement most Indians like to believe the worst of everybody.

That is why I was all prepared when I came back to India to find that practically everybody had something on the brain. After all, the country had been hit by things which were bound to increase corruption such as the shortage of food which in the summer of 1964 was very bad, the high price of food in the cities and the shortage of many supplies, the creeping inflation and the drastic cuts in foreign exchange, the dragging on of the State of Emergency prolonged at the time of the Chinese aggression. Mr. Nehru had bound the country to put a great trust on the civil servants, the constitution and an already neglected public sector and added up to more corruption.

And indeed corruption, corruption, more corruption was the talk everywhere. The air was filled at the drawing-rooms were buzzing with it. Until Nehru, the Home Minister, had taken a public pledge that he would eradicate corruption in India within six months or else resign. He would resign if he failed. In his efforts to make good this pledge Nanda had convened in Delhi a meeting of the Bharat Sadhu Samaj—the All India Society of Sadhus. (A sadhu is a man who has renounced the world and goes about with a begging bowl.) The sadhus, the Home Minister and the Chief Justice of India were all seriously contemplating measures to weed out corruption—so the press reported. A member of the Planning Commission had told the press that research was needed to uproot corruption and that Prohibition had to be enforced because it is drink which is at the root of all evil. One newspaper suggested that the best way to eradicate corruption would be to forbid Ministers to

accept invitations, especially from people of doubtful reputation; another paper recommended that extravagant expenditure be stopped and that election expenses be checked. The Home Minister kept telling the public that now that he had enlisted the active support of one thousand sadhus, things were bound to improve. Those with experience of sadhus merely smiled for sadhus are notoriously interspersed with crooks, blackmailers and begging thieves; and it is impossible to tell a genuinely holy man from his fraudulent counterpart; both go about covered in ashes, with unwashed limbs and unkempt and matted hair filled with lice. The idea of using sadhus to enforce honesty was inspiring to the cartoonists alone. One newspaper demanded that a code of conduct should be enforced upon Ministers in the same manner as it was already being enforced upon administrators who are bound, together with all their relatives, to declare all their assets each year and to refuse gifts.

The most serious suggestion of all was put forward by the Special Branch of the Home Ministry and the Special Police Establishment which conducted a prolonged joint study and submitted a detailed note to the Home Minister. The note pointed out that government servants are not the only sinners; that they are put under temptation by unscrupulous agents of corruption, particularly contractors. The note ended with the following ten point code of conduct for contractors:

Contractors should refrain from: (1) giving bribes to get themselves on the approved lists. (2) they should refrain from forming rings and pooling tenders in order to appear competitive. (3) they should refrain from obtaining contracts by undercutting and making good the loss by sub-standard work (4) they should refrain from resorting to manipulation of rates and quotations with the connivance of the officers. (5) they should refrain from misusing controlled items like cement, iron and steel, etc. (6) they should refrain from submitting false bills, obtaining payment for work not executed. On the other hand contractors should (7) submit to rules and procedure. (8) They should abide by the terms of their contract. (9) They should not bribe officers in cash or kind but observe professional ethics. (10) They should not hesitate to approach higher authority when they have legitimate complaints.

This, according to the press, was the result of an 'elaborate investigation'. After Nanda took the pledge that he would rid

India of corruption he turned his own house into a court; members of the public were invited to come and complain directly to him about corruption. The first day after he made the announcement that he would hold audience every morning in his garden seven people turned up with complaints, none of them documented or indeed relevant. I turned up at his residence on the second day. I had in past told a friend that I would complain of the way in which cinema tickets are sold at black-market prices by touts who stand in queues with the police on hand about overlooking the instructions to ensure they get their cut. My only bit of evidence was the fact that when I wanted to buy tickets for the film *Sahib* at the Lido theatre with Raj Kapoor, the cinema was sold out. Tickets were carried to me through the window of the car in which I was sitting, the price in the full sight of two policemen posted by the theatre.

By the time I arrived in Nehru's garden it looked like a fair-ground. Two big accountancy machines and two weddings, one to shelter the Minister and the other for the public, had been erected. He sat down with the thousands of people. Sitting on the floor were seven young girls. I asked them what they had come to do. They said they came to complain about corruption, so they had brought flowers to greet me with folded hands. Then I said to them that having just graduated as teachers in domestic science, they had been offered job in the rural area instead of Delhi. I tried in vain to point out that Delhi was probably more fully staffed with teachers of domestic science while the rural areas might still be in need of them. They merely kept smiling then. Leads, saying firmly, 'This is corruption. We want jobs in Delhi. By the path leading to the gate of the residence new woman in Punjabi dress, four small children were clinging to her trousers and an infant was held astride her hip which was slipping into her waist-line for she was clearly in much need of it of pregnancy. 'Your honour,' she moaned as she saw me, 'your honour, help me, help me!'

Her story, which had nothing to do with corruption, was tragic. She and her husband were refugees from Partition. They had come to India in 1947 when they were still almost children, and they had been drifting along, from village to village without being able to settle down on land. Her husband had taken jobs

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confiscate the gold they keep in bars in their homes; make out search warrants!' Nanda, who at first had been taking notes with the painstaking application of a schoolboy, tried to get a word in edgeways. 'You had better write a note and send it to me with your proposals; I shall see that it reaches the relevant department. I have nothing to do with currency; that is the concern of the Ministry of Finance and the Reserve Bank and I have no objection to passing your note on.'

It took over fifteen minutes to get rid of the fat little man with the shiny skull. Meanwhile more and more people were clustering on the lawn. I could contain myself no longer. 'Sir, is there so much more corruption than there used to be that it has become necessary for you to spend your mornings this way?'

'How do I know? That is precisely why I am spending my morning in this way, to try and find out.'

'But, Sir, the proper way, it seems to me, is not for you to listen to all the gossip, rumour and wild schemes, but to appoint an ombudsman, or to let the Services enquire.' Nanda was touched to the raw, his expressive moustache so dear to Indian cartoonists, dropped half an inch in protest: 'We don't need an ombudsman! I look into everything myself first, then I pass it on to the people concerned. We certainly do not need an ombudsman!' I had clearly hurt his feelings. As the next complainant came in I took my leave, wishing him good luck; he certainly needed it. That morning, the second of his holding court, there were over 150 people in his garden, all clamouring to be heard, few of them with real cases of corruption, most of them with grievances like the domestic science teachers, some in real need of help like the widow who was still standing surrounded by her children exactly where I had left her. All that Nanda had achieved by what the Calcutta *Statesman* had naughtily called his *Diwani Am* (after the Moghul's open court of justice) was to make corruption the subject of conversation all over India.

'Corruption? Of course there is corruption!' the little man was smiling knowingly through his blue eyes. We had just met at the Delhi airport where our *Caravelle* for Calcutta was delayed. He had introduced himself as a business consultant. It soon became clear that he was not a business consultant but a licence tout and a contact man; and in the course of the time we spent together it also became clear that even big business availed

themselves of his services. The *Caravelle* was so much delayed—most internal flights were running behind schedule all over India that summer, perhaps for the same lack of spare parts which had put out of commission for months three quarters of the lifts of the Ashoka Hotel—that we had to spend the night in Delhi. We dined together as we had time to kill. My companion had begun life in India, he had migrated to America during the war and, being unfit for military service, he had prospered, organizing supplies for PXs, an activity which had taken him to Hongkong. From Hongkong he had come to Calcutta where he had married a British girl and settled as a 'business consultant'. 'When India became independent I knew that people like me would be needed. I knew my way around red tape—the licensing jungle had no secret for me—and I was familiar with the corridors of the Secretariat. You see by the end of the war I had a lot to do with the department of Civil Supplies, in short I knew my way about. I discovered that he had worked for the man whose bathroom had been filled with crates of whisky at £7 to a bottle when whisky was rationed—unofficially to one bottle per month. 'Things are not the same now, they were towards the end of the war, when it was clear that there is not too much scope for red tape and corruption because there is so much more necessary and cumbersome outside it. It just buys time almost as much as it pays to buy a favour. Now everybody is big enough to keep a fulltime coat of arms in Delhi when the full man comes to Delhi it disrupts his business especially since he may have to come not once or twice but often out of time—and usually he is kept hanging about. So a pay for time is not so to pay the official he is dealing with. In the new world it does not even matter if the answer he gets is 'No'. 'No' is just as valuable an answer in business as 'Yes'—what is expensive is delay. Sometimes I work for a small client either because I like him or because it is no trouble, but normally I work for big people.' He recited off a number of big international firms. 'Take this trip. I came to Delhi for the day only, that is why I have no luggage, of course it does not matter as I come so often, the Ashoka Hotel knows me and they keep a small overnight bag for me. Yes I was telling you, I have come for a big firm, a British firm, they want to start a quite new factory and have to get a licence for it. The chairman of the British company is already in India negotiating;

but he wants to know whether the Americans are trying to get the licence, and on what terms. This is where I come in. It is difficult for him to pry, he is too big a man. But I am small,' he smiled at his pun and went on. When I find out what the Americans are up to the chairman can underbid if he thinks it is still worth it.

My companion then explained that this is not corruption merely business cunning. Real corruption he said arises when firms invite civil servants to stay in their guest houses and provide dancing girls, or when they pay for scholarships for their children to study abroad irrespective of whether the children have the ability to continue the education. All the big Indian businessmen become millionaires they underinvoiced and their principal shareholders to come in a bank in Switzerland. It's only the small time wealthy. But that is what share-holders are there for a record of many Indian businessmen. Do you know that at the time of the Mundra scandal, you remember the cry that I. I. Kherani had to resign because he told me that I had not told him he was Finance Minister, at that time there were corrupt businessmen and industrialists who held a big part of the shares. How we looking for cash in an attempt to capture Mundra share to prevent them from crashing on the stock exchange. Well he had so much of his money away in Switzerland that he was selling dollars and Swiss francs privately through brokers at a 25 per cent discount. I had to pay for my wife in Scotland for and I was not Swiss francs at a 25 per cent discount instead of a 50 per cent premium. What am I saving the premium and the cost up to nothing is high as 50 per cent.

As the evening went on I made the error of saying that although there was no doubt corruption in some quarters, my husband's firm was not involved in any illegal market transactions. This brought every sheep to rest. You think so, there you sit and are so complacently and think you are clean. Let me tell you this is not true. All big and small businesses are partners in corruption. Let me give you just one example. Of course you may not pay a bribe to get an import licence, but you do not hesitate to buy in the open, the grey and the black market those supplies you vitally need and without which you

would have to shut down production. You do not buy in bulk in black market, no, of course not! But you do buy the marginal bags of cement, or the odd length of special steel, or the odd bit of tin plate in the black market. This is an indirect subsidy to corruption. If nobody bought in the black market there would be no black market." And to drive his point finally home he explained how Indian businessmen look on production. The purpose for which they are in business, rather than banking or speculation is not, as naive people like myself believe, to produce as much as possible and to sell at controlled prices but to appear as inefficient as possible to have as many production 'break-downs' as possible. In that way they get as much through the factory gate as possible without having to account for it and they can sell it in the black market where they have the twin advantages that prices are higher and profits tax-free. "There was the time when one big firm got a license to manufacture ball-bearing, but they had so many teething troubles, so it seemed, that its duty-bearing came out of the plant for quite a time. That firm had a quasi-monopoly on ball-bearings, so they offered to go on common ion 'unpatented' ball-bearings of inferior quality - the only ones in India. All they did was to sell to their own customers their own ball-bearings, indeed of inferior quality, at inflated prices and to get a commission on the sale in the bargain. On take cement! You of course know that cement is controlled - the price is controlled and the customers have to have an allotment in order to buy cement. But if in your cement factory there is a breakdown the excise officer, who is in any case in your pay, does not have to sit at the gate and count the bags of cement which leave the factory since the plant is stopped for repairs. This makes it easy for you to get out, unaccounted for, the 800 odd bags of cement which represent the full batch at the time of your 'breakdown'. And each time you "breakdown" you take cement to the black market. And to think that the British look down their noses at their Indian colleagues and say that their factories are badly run! It makes me

* When I asked Mammal he had denied this. It is in fact clearly untrue, for had it been true the new 100-ton bomb would have been built in a third of the time. It is however a little true that even the expert on corruption like my chance companion do not bother to distinguish between the honest and the dishonest. This applies not only to business but to politicians. And it is a major reason why there is so much more talk of corruption in India than actual corruption.

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laugh! It is the British who have no clue. After all what, I ask you, is business for, if not to make money?"

By the time dinner was over and he had had a few drinks the fat little man was getting more and more precise about the jobs he had done for people, some of whom were very well known indeed. I would have discounted everything he was saying had it not been that his stories were making various memories click. There was for instance the big Indian car manufacturer with two types of finish—the finish for the masses and the finish for VIPs. He spends a lot of money on the VIP cars, indeed loses money, but then he does not have to bother about how the mass produced cars are finished and he sell them at an exorbitant price which the Government cannot do anything to bring it down do not object to because *the cars are fully up to the mark and more*. A chance companion spoke I suddenly remembered that one of my friends had such a VIP car. When he had given me a lift a few days ago I had been so struck by the amenities and the finish of the car that I had enquired about the make. 'Well, it is like this I put my name down for a car in the usual way. As you know in India Government cars, like your Jones or Smith there was no knowledge of the name. I was told I would have to wait eight months but as an extra 5,000 rupees, a third of the price of the car. I got angry and told the agent that I needed the car now and left my office address with him. The very next week I got this car which was worth at least 5,000 rupees more than the cost of the normal model at the official price. Because it is so much better than the run of the mill model I insisted on paying more, as there is no listed price for this car we eventually struck a compromise and I paid an extra 1,000 rupees. The real point, however, is not that I paid less than I ought to, but that there is an improvement made in the run of the mill type for special people and that mass production is not stepped up because there is always a gain to be had from people paying to shorten the queue.'*

* In fact the 5,000 rupees paid to the agent, not the manufacturer, the agent may then pay something to get the car allotted to him but this bribe probably goes to some quite junior employee of the factory. What keeps production down is the restriction on importation for the parts still manufactured abroad, what keeps the quality and the standard is the poor supervision which is frequent in much Indian industry as will be seen in the chapter on steel. It is indeed typical that my informant, despite his responsible position, had jumped to the wrong conclusion.

'Ministers, administrators, controls and municipalities are the centres of corruption,' my chance companion was saying. 'Some Ministers are approachable and do favours, though not all of them. All the machinery of the State which concerns itself with licensing, permits and location is corrupt at some level or other, and the municipalities stink. This is of course not confined to India; municipalities are bad the world over and some ministers even in England are corrupt, remember the Belcher case? The difference is that in England there is a judicial enquiry, a Lynskey Tribunal, here there is a whitewash when it is a minister. You must have noticed the other day one Deputy Minister resigned because she was being investigated, the funny thing is that she was caught for the wrong reasons. Her secretary, a friend of mine who had a private feud with her, reported the fact that she received an air-conditioner from a big businessman. It so happens this was not true. She had paid for the air-conditioner, an old one which she was getting repaired for a fee as a favour, since there are no spares in stock any more. But when they began investigating her affairs she could not explain how she came to possess two houses in the more expensive residential part of Delhi, so she quickly resigned yet she is still an M.P. In England she would have had to resign from the constituency and the party.'

What he had said about municipalities was no exaggeration. Municipalities in India have always had a bad reputation, except where they had a Civil Servant as Chief Officer, with defined powers and considerable independence for the councillors. Bombay, being a big city, had always had such a Chief Officer, moreover the standard of its councillors had always been unusually high, and its affairs had always been conducted on the whole with propriety. But on my return to Bombay I discovered that this was no longer so. The best example is the green belt racket. This works quite simply. The corporation had declared its intention to institute a much needed green belt, and had made it known that it would purchase a very large amount of land at controlled prices for that purpose. The green belt area had not been defined, all that was known was that the Municipality would never have enough money to execute its plan on that scale. The racket consisted of informing a particular owner that his land was going to be in the green belt area unless he

paid some kind hearted councillor 5,000 rupees in which case influence could be brought to bear to shift the green belt elsewhere. While I was in Bombay friends of mine who had had their land in Juhu released from the green belt plan once before were informed that it was now going to be included in the green belt once more, unless they paid another 5,000 rupees.

Clearly there had been a decline in standards in Bombay, which had always been with Madras, India's most honest city. I was given other examples. A friend told me how she had had part of her flat requisitioned under the Defence of India Act, on the ground that it was too large for her—that her petitions had failed but that as soon as she gave a bribe of 800 rupees, the Controller of Accommodation had summoned her and said her flat was derequisitioned, that there had been an error. Another friend told me with real shock that he had gone to see a very senior excise officer who had accepted, in front of him, a present wrapped in a parcel from a businessman who had dealings with that official's department.

"There is no denying it. There has been an alarming drop of integrity in the Government here," complained two Maharashtra Ministers. Bombay is now in Maharashtra. Both of them blamed this drop of integrity on the need for Ministers to make friends and the way in which some Ministers were setting a bad example. "Once a Minister misbehaves, it is extraordinary how fast the rot sets in all the way down," said one of the two Ministers, who thought the rot so was but the password goes like lightning and each man begins to fend for himself while the going is good. An honest administration cannot check a dishonest Minister but an honest Minister can do a great deal to clean up a dishonest administration, if he only has the support of his Chief Minister. But we have not had a good Chief Minister since Morarji Desai and Chavan left for Delhi. The rot has set in, it will be difficult to weed it out.

The rot had set in in the Indian Airlines Corporation also, especially after the chairman ship was taken away from an administrator and had been given by Nehru to a politician without drive or reputation. Plans were late almost every time I had to take them; complaints by passengers were no longer acknowledged, and safety regulations even on tourist runs were ignored. Thus when I collapsed in the plane from Jodhpur to

Delhi there was no oxygen on board, the only medicines were mercurochrome and enterovioform tablets, the male air-hostess was not trained in first aid and, far more serious, at Agra airport there was neither oxygen nor medical facilities of any kind which is why they had to radio for an air force doctor to come and attend to me. At the specific request of the Secretary of the External Affairs Ministry to whom I mentioned this—as it is a tourist route and this plane was filled with elderly American ladies on their way to the Taj Mahal who must, by virtue of their years, be a responsibility—I wrote a detailed report to the Chairman of the Indian Airlines Corporation. The Secretary of the External Affairs Ministry forwarded my report with an accompanying letter. A year later, I had not yet received an acknowledgement let alone an apology. Yet unpresurized planes like the *D-10s* fly on this route supposed at least to carry oxygen. The Indian Airlines Corporation in sharp contrast to the government owned but quite separate international line Air India International was never very good—it has now become bad and at the local level corrupt to boot. I had it explained by one business executive who is anxious to be sure of short notice bookings in the Indian network that, unless one bribes the booking clerks or other temporary jobs to their relations one is blindly told that the planes are full.

However, there is another form of corruption which is foisted upon the administration by sycophancy and uselessness and which is far more detrimental to the future of India than how the Indian Airlines Corporation disposes of its seats or whether the green belt keeps stuffing cash into a Municipal Corporation wants money.

During my trip to Bengal I ran into two cases which I think illustrate by the contrast between them what I have in mind.

In one small town the civil servant in charge of the administration received from his immediate superior the order to 'decrease municipal rates because this is what the Chief Minister wants'. The young man pointed out that the Municipal by-laws did not provide for a decrease in rates and that it would be bad for the municipality. 'Change the by-laws, and never mind about what's good—the Chief Minister wants this done', was the answer. The young man refused and asked for permission to

seek the advice of the Secretary of the Department concerned. Permission was granted but the same orders were repeated by the Secretary, 'This is what the Chief Minister wants, go and do it.'

'Not unless I get written order,' retorted the spirited young man, standing on administrative procedure. His reason for being so stubborn was that he needed the money to increase the town's water supply. The Secretary refused to issue a written order; the young man asked if he would be permitted to record on his note his disapproval of the scheme and submit it for decision to the Chief Minister himself. If you want to sign your own funeral you may, said the Secretary. The note duly endorsed by the young man went up to the Chief Minister who returned it with the following note in the margin: 'Sorry, I did not know this was against the by-law, cancel the order.' And instead of bearing the young man malice he recommended him for a scholarship to the United States.

In glaring contrast to this courageous young man was the senior collector I met during the same trip who kept turning his sails to the whims of the para-bosses of Bengal. Atulya Ghosh. I had met this administrator before when there had been an industrial strike in which Atulya Ghosh had been interested. He had failed to interfere although his duty required him to take steps to prevent a breach of the peace. And on this visit of mine I found the same administrator sitting, a passive onlooker, while a strike engineered by Atulya Ghosh's local benchman was threatening to paralyse production at Durgapur, the British steel mill. Had the Collector interfered in the strike Atulya Ghosh might have been displeased. Yet, at best, all that could have happened as a consequence is that he would have been transferred to an insalubrious district with inadequate educational facilities for his children.

Has corruption increased in India? My answer is yes. But one must not exaggerate. The multiplication of controls has increased the scope for corruption and the public has become more willing to break, quite openly, the more silly restrictions and the unnecessary laws Government is so fond of. Thus exchange control regulations are flaunted by almost everybody because the public feels about foreign exchange restrictions and the 'P' form without which they cannot go abroad much like

people in Britain used to feel about pink petrol during and after the Second World War, something to be got without getting caught. Inflation and the multiplication of red tape has also led to more corruption; this is government's own fault. Too many rules, above all too many unnecessary rules and too many changes in the rules must lead to inefficiency and corruption.

However, taking a long term view, my guess would be that corruption will go down. The younger generation is far more honest than their parents, far more determined to argue with the sub-inspector instead of bribing him. Today Indians get the worst of all worlds. They call themselves very corrupt because they insist on comparing themselves with Britain for honesty. If, to cheer them up, one ventures to say there is far less corruption in India than in Italy, Iran or South America they get offended by the mere comparison. Yet the truth lies somewhere in between, India is more honest than Italy, less honest than France, and given Indian circumstances it seems a miracle that there is so much honesty. Taxi drivers seldom cheat, one does not have to check the hotel bill for extraneous items, debts are considered so sacred that children will go on paying their parents' debts at extortionate rates of interest rather than repudiate them. There is a great deal of basic honesty in the people, and when the younger generation gets into its own, it will find a great deal of support from the masses who are very quick at finding, respecting and supporting a 'good man' and by 'good man' the Indian masses mean an honest man.

III

STEEL: THE BRITISH, AMERICAN AND RUSSIAN CONTRIBUTIONS

'I shall eat all the steel you can produce' scoffed a senior British official when Janshehpur, a textile magnate began to build a steel mill in the middle of the Bihar jungles at the turn of the century.

STEEL

By 1970 India hopes to make some 12 to 16 million tons of steel; an ambitious hope indeed when one remembers that in 1964 India did not make more than 6 million tons and with great difficulty and with wastage of men, material and money. Yet there seems no alternative. Once one has decided to industrialize the only way to learn how to industrialize is by industrializing. As Kamala Chaudhry, the industrial sociologist, put it when discussing all the mistakes that were made in the steel expansion. 'If you do not create the factories where will they learn? India will only learn from her experience and her mistakes. It takes time, that is all. Remember, you in the West have had the time to grow, we have not got that time, this simply means that our industrialization must perforce be more wasteful and expensive than it was in the West. The Russians too had a lot of wastage, and they too had to import a lot of foreigners. There is no substitute for becoming but doing, even if we are doing it wrong. Unless we have industrial complexes we cannot have a truly industrial proletariat, it is the same with attitudes to caste, work, or productivity. Only through being industrialized can the people come to develop an industrial outlook.'

In 1952 India produced 1.5 million tons of pigot steel. There were two main steel mills. IISC O, the steel mill built by Sir Jamshedji Tata at Jamshedpur in Bihar which with its 1 million tons of steel, was the largest in Asia and the Commonwealth; and IISC O at Barrackpore, near Calcutta, run by a British-Indian managing agency with an output of about 300,000 tons of steel and a small steel mill in the south.

By nature India is a maker of steel. India has some of the world's richest and largest deposits of iron ore reserves assessed at 21,000 million tons or a quarter of the world's reserves; it has limited amounts of coking coal and metallurgical coal but it has unlimited amounts of low grade high-ash content coal, which can be used after being washed, as coking coal for making steel. In addition India has the other ingredients required as well as a

cheap labour force, a large enough core of mechanically minded people to process the steel into various durable consumer goods, and a very large home market for steel and steel products. In fact India has been importing large quantities of steel for years. According to experts India ought to be, after Australia, the world's cheapest producer of steel.

This explains why, as early as in 1948, two firms of consultants, one from Britain and one from the United States, were asked by the Government of India to report on the possibility of setting up one 500,000 ton steel plant somewhere in India.

India was quite justified in putting the expansion of steel into the core of the second Five Year Plan. Indeed, with wisdom of hindsight, many critics have argued that steel ought to have been included in the first Five Year Plan also.

However, for some obscure idiosyncrasy, none of the rational arguments were put forward by the Government of India when it did embark at first upon its steel expansion. Instead, the arguments used were that India must become self-sufficient in steel because a self-respecting independent country must be able to manufacture the raw materials it needs and because steel provides a base for heavy industry. In addition Professor Bethelheim, the French Marxist economist, argued in India that the main reason for choosing steel is that one cannot eat it. Professor Bethelheim's argument is ruthless; making steel produces forced savings.

No sooner had the framers of the second Five Year Plan decided on steel than they ran into financial difficulties. This was Government's own fault. TISCO and IISCO steel were much cheaper than imported steel but ever since the war the Government had financed steel imports through an Equalisation Fund. All steel, Indian and imported, was sold at standard prices; the difference between the landed price and the indigenous price was pocketed by the Government while the Indian producer was only allowed a fixed and inadequate return on his investment. Thus, neither TISCO nor IISCO had been able to set aside reserves for modernisation, let alone expansion.

The credit for pushing the Government of India into steel manufacturing goes to G. D. Birla, the leading Indian industrialist, disliked by the public and so distrusted by the Government that when C. D. Deshmukh was Finance Minister he used

to pride himself in public on never giving Birla an audience, Birla decided to plunge from textiles, jute, machinery and motor-cars into steel. He suggested to the Government of India that he would set up a private steel mill for which he would provide 10 per cent of the capital. The remaining 90 per cent would have to come from government guaranteed loans in India and abroad. Not unnaturally Government's reaction was that if it guaranteed 90 per cent of the money, it should own the steel plant. The fact that a Government steel mill was in line with Nehru's socialist belief that the state should control the means of production made the planners decide that since private capital was not forthcoming beyond 10 per cent, the new steel venture would be in the public sector.

Thus it was Birla's failure to find enough money rather than any rigid leftist ideology which eventually made the Government of India start a nationalised steel industry, parallel to the existing private steel industry. It had to set out on self-sustaining growth. If IISCO or SAILCO had had enough money of their own to spend, and Birla had been able to find even a third of the money required, the Government might never have gone into steel. Steel making was something totally out of the experience of civil servants and politicians alike, and both tried enough on their hands without adding steel to their many headaches. But Birla failed. In the summer of 1951 a delegation headed by a senior official set about the developed world shopping for a 500,000 ton steel plant.

In 1952 India had plenty of foreign exchange, thanks to the convertible sterling balances accumulated in Britain during the war. Critics of the Indian plan were saying that India ought to spend more money abroad. The mission set out with high hopes. However, the Americans who were just recovering from a major steel strike were not interested, the British on the other hand were fully booked up with their own reconstruction programme. Only the Germans showed some interest. They were very eager to get back into world markets, were keen to invest outside Germany in case the cold war warmed up. The firms of Krupps and Demag, well-known names in the steel world, got together and offered to set up a 500,000 ton steel plant in India on a partnership basis with the Government.

No sooner had the German deal been announced than the

Russians decided to score a political victory in the Cold War. Unsolicited, they offered India a 1 million ton steel plant package. Naturally the Government of India accepted. Not to be outdone the British steel industry, at the instigation of the British Government, suddenly found it possible, despite the pressing calls of reconstruction, to form a consortium in order to tender for a third steel plant, also of 1 million tons on terms apparently as attractive as the Russians.

This is how, by fluke, chance and competitive coexistence by 1956 the Government of India found itself saddled with no less than three steel plants of 1 million tons each (the German mill had meanwhile been doubled) all three to be started more or less at the same time. In addition, because of the emphasis put on the expansion of steel during the second Five Year Plan, both TISCO and IISCO had decided to double their capacity, with help from international finance underwritten by the Government of India. Thus, by the end of the second Five Year Plan India was to produce nearly 6 million tons of steel more than four times as much as at the beginning. Such an expansion was bound to put a great strain upon scarce resources—transport, electricity, coal and above all trained manpower.

THREE STEEL SISTERS

Rourkela. In 1953 a Memorandum of Association was drafted between the Government of India and Krupps-Demag. The West German government was not involved in the negotiations. The contract was for a plant costing 800 million rupees; the German consultants were to get a fee of 24 million rupees. In addition they would have equity participation rising in proportion to the volume of purchases of equipment in Germany to a maximum of 95 million rupees in German money. The Krupps-Demag project report, worked out in the minutest details and submitted in 1954, was finally accepted in 1955. It was for a half million ton plant. However, in the meanwhile the World Bank had sent a team to study India's steel requirements and had recommended that India should produce 6 million tons of

ingot steel by 1960-1. Until the report of the World Bank Indian steel requirements had been grossly underestimated. On the strength of that report the Government of India asked Krupps-Demag to revise their plan and to prepare a blue print for a one million ton plant. The revised plan was accepted early in 1956. By then, however, the Government of India no longer wanted German equity participation because the Industrial Policy Resolution specified that steel should be in the public sector. From being participants Krupps-Demag became mere consultants, while the responsibility for carrying out the erection fell upon Indian civil servants under the aegis of Hindustan Steel, the Government corporation created by the Government to run the steel plant.

With expansion, costs had naturally got to be revised; the plant was now expected to cost 1,200 million rupees; the foreign exchange required for imports from Germany rose to 890 million rupees; the revised plant was to produce steel according to a new process called LD and the finished steel was to be rolled into sheets. The rate of interest originally agreed with Krupps-Demag on all sums outstanding was $6\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. This was subsequently revised for half the amount to $5\frac{1}{4}$ per cent.

Bhilai. The Russian agreement for a one million ton steel plant was signed in 1955. Russia was lending India £40 million for the imported equipment, and charging $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent for the loan, which was to be repaid in twelve years. The total cost of the plant was to be £105 million. The Russians in addition agreed to give 27 per cent of the smaller engineering jobs to firms in India in order to save foreign exchange. The Bhilai contract was a package deal, the Russians being responsible for everything and undertaking to train Indians at all levels for all the required jobs. The United Nations Technical Assistance Programme was to assist in helping to train Indians in Russia. In all 686 Indians were to be trained in the Soviet Union.

Durgapur. The British project at Durgapur was very similar to the Russian one at Bhilai. It was for one million tons of steel ingots; its cost was £103 million; the overall rate of interest agreed upon was 1 per cent above Bank Rate.* Of this money £15 million was lent by the British Government and £11.5 million on easy terms by a consortium of British banks under a

* This in fact has varied from $5\frac{1}{4}$ to 8% but has averaged between $5\frac{1}{4}$ and 6%.

letter of credit. Thirteen British engineering firms formed a consortium called JSCON to build the plant as a 'turn-key' job under the supervision of International Construction which acted as a clerk of works for Hindustan Steel.*

Rourkela, Bhilai, Durgapur have four things in common. All three come under Hindustan Steel, the autonomous board set up by the Ministry of Steel for the purpose of the steel expansion. All three have at the head a General Manager appointed by the Minister who usually chooses a general administrator from the Civil Service to fill the post. All three are designed to produce one million tons of steel ingots and have built into their blue prints, room for further expansion. Rourkela however differs from Bhilai and Durgapur in that it uses a more sophisticated method for making steel in manufacture of more sophisticated finished product. Finally all three plants had to be built from scratch in the middle of a wilderness. The ideal location for a steel plant was at Durgapur in West Bengal the site originally selected for the project by the Anglo-American consultants.

However, the Communist were too scared of Communist and labour unrest in West Bengal to agree to put the plant there, they chose Rourkela. Communist in the Puri district wanted to locate their plant. Durgapur had to be chosen. The Chief Minister did not want Russia to be bothered by too much trouble already with steel Communist and the refugees from East Pakistan. It was the Chief Minister who decided to locate the Russian plant at Bhilai in the Central Provinces. And this is how the British, with enormous expenditure were able to get the best location. Durgapur had a running railway line. The best site on the Great Eastern Road and the main railway line (which runs through all the three plants) at the top of the iron ore and the coal it runs the electricity of the Damodar Valley Corporation and within walking distance of the big coke ovens built by the West Bengal Government near the Maithon Dam, one of the big dams of the Damodar Valley Corporation, the very dam which supplies Durgapur with its water, in addition it is on a 70 mile long canal which links Durgapur with the port of Calcutta.

For all three steel plants the jungle had to be cleared, roads

* A turn key plant is one which is to be handed over to the client who will then operate it himself.

had to be built or improved, the railway lines had to be doubled, more waggons had to be provided, port facilities had to be improved to take care of the heavy equipment, electricity had to be provided and a township had to be built in such a way that it would not only house the staff but be capable of expansion when the steel plant became the focus of the industrial complex which, from fertilizers and chemicals to engineering, they are meant to be.

BHILAI RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

THE Bhilai saga was a story I think to the foresight of the Russians who must then be responsible for the erection as well as the commissioning of the plant, a to minimize those hazards which always accompany ventures on this scale, especially in an underdeveloped country. Indeed when the Russians agreed in 1963 to build a four million ton steel plant at Bokaro, one of their conditions was that Parthasarthy & Co. Ltd. the Indian firm of consultants who had done much of the preliminary work on the project should be compensated with them and they alone, would assume responsibility.

The contract was a well wrapped up package as can be devised with the intricate contingencies involved. Yet, even so, the plant was completed eight months late and costs rose from 11 billion to 2 billion rupees. But there was no scandal, no press campaign, no questions in Parliament. Even both the delays and the rise in cost were due to Indian incompetence which the Indians preferred to keep quiet while the Russians, being disciplined political realists, did not complain about it in public. Indeed, each time a bottleneck threatened to strangle the project, Khrushchev would cable Nehru personally and something would be done. Thus when the non-ore mine tied to Bhilai fell down on its schedule Russian engineers took it over and did not charge extra for their work.

Once the contract was signed the Russians who were supplying a standard plant, their own form of PL 480, were quick to provide all the most detailed blue prints for what an American

steel expert has called 'the best designed steel mill for continuous production' he had seen 'anywhere in the world, including America and Russia.'

The first time I visited Bhilai was in 1956. Everybody was busy turning the jungle into a steel complex.

There were cranes everywhere. The jungle looked like the quay of a busy port; there were small cranes, mobile cranes, giant cranes, overhead cranes, lift cranes. I was told that five of the bigger cranes had been sent to help to unload material from the Russian ships which had been hanging about the port of Vizagapatnam waiting to be unloaded. The Russian motto was that one must not do by hand what can be done by machine and that it pays to have more machines, just in case. The loan of cranes to the Indian port authorities was a good example.

Leaving nothing to chance the Russians had taken immense care to blue print everything from the screwing of a screw to the digging of a hole in the ground. As one Russian explained to me, 'In Russia too we have had to put up plants in under-developed areas, so we are used to planning every detail, it pays.' There were already 100,000 volumes of jobbing sheets at Bhilai and more were on their way.

On the advice of the Russians Hindustan Steel had given all the civil engineering works to one contractor Hindustan Construction, the best in India which was following the Russian blueprints under careful Soviet supervision.

Everywhere the meticulous attention to details was in evidence. Thus the refractory bricks which had had to be imported from Russia to line the blast furnaces were packed individually in brown paper and stuck in straw before being crated. 'You treat these bricks as if they were porches,' I teased a Russian who protested indignantly, 'Here hardly any brick gets broken, they are very expensive and in short supply the world over.' In Bhilai breakage was 2 per cent against 10 per cent in Durgapur where the bricks were crated in straw but without brown paper.

At Bhilai every Russian even the mason had an Indian understudy. The theory was that whenever the Russian felt he could hand over the operation of a particular function to his Indian understudy he would do so—but the Russian and not the Indian was to be sole judge of the time when this would happen. Training Indians in the Soviet Union in anticipation

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of Bhilai's requirements had been slowed down by the Government of India's failure to recruit personnel in good time. However, once recruited the Indians were given a very thorough training indeed. For one thing there are no patents or trade secrets in Russia and so they were allowed to learn everything the Russians themselves knew; since steel plants are Government-owned in Russia, they were allowed to learn by doing—instead of learning by watching, as is so often the case with private enterprise. Finally the Russians who had obviously plunged in all earnest into 'Operation Steel' had managed to communicate their sense of dedication and urgency to the Indians. Bhilai, whenever I visited it, struck me as a buzzing beehive; making steel was so much the all in all that there was no time over for indoctrination. Thus when I attended the Russian language class the teacher instead of teaching Marxist dogma had contented himself with collectivizing *Lejardin de ma tante*, 'The sun shone on the cooperative harvester as the cooperators, singing gaily, harvested the cooperative's crop.'

ROURKELA: RECIPE FOR FAILURE

THANKS to the combined ignorance of the Government of India and of the German participants, the Rourkela contract was so drawn up that only by a miracle could things have gone well.

First of all the Germans had no experience of building in India and both Krupps and Demag, known throughout the world as they are for the quality of their manufacturing, were quite new at erection and had never before built a steel plant. Secondly, it is never a good idea for one's supplier to be one's consultant at the same time especially when one third of the orders placed in Germany have to be placed by the consultant with himself. In order to keep an eye on Krupps-Demag Hindustan Steel had appointed a Yugoslav steel engineer as its clerk of works. The choice was unfortunate. Nationalism was bound to come into play and his criticisms were, so the Germans

argued, sharpened by memories of the German record in Yugoslavia during the War.

But all of this was nothing compared to the fact that, according to the contract, no less than thirty-five engineering firms in Germany and seventy civil engineering firms in India and abroad were involved in the erection of the steel plant and that no provision was made for the commissioning of the plant once its production had been established. A package deal would have been infinitely more desirable for both sides.

In the end, as could have been expected, Rourkela was completed thirty-six months behind schedule while costs went up to all over two billion rupees. Relations between the Germans and Hindustan Steel were bad; questions in Parliament were frequent and scathing; the Germans did not hesitate to complain at Indian inefficiency; and there was much truth on both

sic

German contractors were not responsible for shipping the equipment to Rourkela; that was the responsibility of Hindustan Steel. To coordinate despatches and book shipping space Hindustan Steel set up an office in London. Nevertheless, machinery frequently arrived late or thanks to some muddle, was unloaded in the wrong port and/or delayed in the customs.

On the civil engineering side the muddle was even worse, largely because some of the key work had been given by Hindustan Steel to an Indian contractor who had neither the experience nor the equipment to carry out his job. The Government of India had to bale him out by collecting equipment from various of its own multi-purpose projects and to lend him money. Even so much of the civil engineering works at Rourkela were sub-standard, had to be repaired and were to continue to give trouble after the completion of the plant. And in a steel mill which specializes in the manufacture of flat products the civil engineering works are even more vital than in an ordinary steel mill because so much of the ground has to be prepared to carry the very long and heavy cold rolling mills.

The first time I visited Rourkela was in 1956 on my way to Bhilai. Although the German contract had been signed two years before the Russian one both sites were at about the same stage of development because changes in design and size had retarded the beginning of the work at Rourkela.

Crates of all descriptions were piled up in any order all over a couple of miles. As far as the eye could see lay stores of all kinds; one could hardly walk and it was not possible to ride in a jeep for the pile-up. How could anybody find what he was looking for, was my first thought. In the absence of cranes—nobody had remembered to order cranes to unload, since cranes for unloading are not part of the erection process—it was practically impossible to move the materials cluttered by the railway. The Public Relations Officer who had come to meet me off the train informed me that they were waiting for a crane to arrive 'soon'; as a matter of fact, he added lazily, 'we have one small crane, it had to be mounted on a truck and it is working somewhere'; his hand swept the dumps pointing towards the far side of the station. 'The trouble is that the firm which has got hold of the crane refuses to let it go for fear of being stuck again. The engineer of that firm says he is not going to be held back on *his* schedule by the inefficiency of others.' We picked our way with considerable difficulty through a jungle of crates, iron rods, pipes, nuts, cement bags toward the steamy office where the the Yugoslav engineer was staying. On the way we passed a temporary hut surrounded by crates piled so high that it looked like a little hut in a forested enclosure. The PRO seeing my reaction explained that the German contractors whose office this particular hut was, did not trust anyone and had insisted on bringing everything in on the siding to where they could keep an eye on it, irrespective of whether the equipment would be needed later. 'He never obeys', said I, but the PRO was in no mood to jest. He was far from happy at having to take a journalist round and worried about what I might write.

The Yugoslav was gloom impersonate. He had to keep in order thirty-five German firms all quarrelling with each other for priority of service, unloading and civil engineering works so that they could get ahead with their erection and go home. 'Life here is very primitive and they are not happy, who can blame them. Besides their firms deliver goods in Germany on time but then there are immense delays in shipment and customs clearance, and more annoying still it often happens that crate 2 arrives long before crate 1. They don't know where to stack things, and there are no cranes. I immediately asked for cranes when I came but there is an all-India shortage of cranes and it

takes a long time for cranes to arrive from abroad! The Germans here are bad enough without Krupps-Demag who are not co-operating as they should. Now that they are no longer partners they are not interested in the schedule of works or the outcome.' He took me to see some of the excavations, they were flooded by the rain and since no pumping equipment had been provided it would take time to drain the excavations, especially since unloading the pumps would not be easy. 'Our railway station is so cramped that it is difficult to bring more equipment, first we must move what is there. Besides there are not enough railway waggons and we have to wait sometimes for weeks for a booking. Hindustan Steel expects me to perform miracles,' groaned the Yugoslav, 'but I have no control over the railways. The railways are behind in doubling the line and they have no waggons.'

The exasperation of the Germans particularly of the Krupps-Demag representative was palpable. They were highly conscious that their reputation was at stake and yet they too were helpless and their automatic reaction was to blame the Government of India for everything.

My next visit to Rourkela two years later coincided with the lighting of the first steel furnace twelve months behind schedule. No sooner lit it developed a hot point and had to be closed. To make for additional difficulties the pig-iron plant could not cast all the pig-iron produced. The operator of the casting apparatus was not fully familiar with the rate of breakage in the casting process and production very low. However, compared with my first visit there were vast improvements in certain fields. If no amount of materials had been cleared, there were cranes, the railway line had been doubled, there was a proper railway station, the township was taking shape, some unfinished steel was being produced and there was order on the site, gone were the rickshaws, the crates, the beams, the bricks, and one could in fact move through in a jeep. Nevertheless politically the mess was as bad as ever. There had been rate questions in Parliament because Krupps-Demag had flown first class, six bricklayers from Germany at enormous cost in wages and *per diem* allowances, to be paid by Hindustan Steel in addition to the terms of the existing contract.

This had stirred Indian opinion in no uncertain fashion, especially since India had by then run into its foreign exchange

crisis and was already finding it difficult to finance existing commitments. Krupps-Demag's defence was that these six bricklayers were specialists in the erection of tall industrial chimneys and could not be found in India. (In Bhilai the Russians had included their bricklayers in the package and in Durgapur they had in fact been recruited locally.)

Whenever I visited Rourkela there was some mess and tensions were always as thick as a rhinoceros hide. This scathing description comes from a learned study undertaken at Columbia University by two Indian economists.*

The first problems arose when the site had to be reclaimed and enlarged to accommodate the new iron capacity and several by-product plant that had not been anticipated initially. In the absence of successful bids for erecting what the signing of contracts was a little late, about 15 months later, with an inexperienced contractor. In addition Rourkela had its General Manager five times in six years. The chronological sequence caused costs increased sharply for the first six months to over 100 million rupees. And the completion of the main part of the plant was delayed. A major cause of the delay was the cold rolling mill had a gap between the completion of the building the time lag to a minimum of 10 months.

As each section went into production the Germans handed operations over to Hindustan Steel Ltd. after having proven its capacity to produce as per programme. It was reported in 1961 that out of the three blast furnaces, only two could be put into operation 'unless the slag ladle order for the first 100,000 tons of the remaining two furnaces were produced only about 100 tons a month as against 600 tons of pig iron produced at the time they were taken over from the Germans.

There was a serious shortage of skilled workers, technicians and sectional head. The training programme it tried proved to be inadequate. The maintenance of the plant was hobbled by as spares were in short supply. In addition because the significance of import orders was not appreciated in the heavy engineering branches of the Government of India, and because maintenance staff did not have adequate authority to act to prevent trouble, sometimes, there were deficiencies in coal because other plants had not been brought into production as scheduled (washeries). It was also found

* Public International Development Financing: A Research Project of the Columbia University Law School Report No. 9 Public International Development Financing in India, New York, July 1964.

that some West German supplies of machinery and equipment were not up to specifications. To add to all these points, labour morale was poor, and there was considerable absenteeism, lack of discipline and overstaffing. There were also inadequate communications and transportation facilities.

The net effect of all these factors was to raise costs, both capital and current, to reduce output to damage the plant*. It was stated at the ministerial level that Rourkela could not be rated with the other two steel plants.

The German reaction was one of astonishment. Eventually these feelings were embodied in the Solvay Report, where amended version was described as the most serious indictment of inefficiency and mismanagement in the world of steel-making. At one stage in early 1962 the Development Aid Committee of the Bundesrat decided that the Third Plan expansion of Rourkela to 1.3 million tons of ingot capacity should not be undertaken until after the plant is installed, had reached its optimal level of production.

DURGAPUR: HALF-WAY HOUSE

Of the three projects Durgapur ought to have been the most successful. It had everything in its favour: the location, the absence of language barriers and above all the fact that both Britons and Indians had an intimate knowledge of each other. Indeed, knowing how many lip-there can be between the cup and the lip, the British had given themselves comfortable margins in order not to be accused of falling behind schedule and they were able to produce an Indian-run plant which, for the other two plants, had to come from abroad.

However, despite all these built-in advantages Durgapur was to emerge half-way between the halcyon performance of Bhilai and the shambles of Rourkela. The blame for much of what went wrong at Durgapur falls upon Hindustan Steel—or rather the Steel Ministry, for Hindustan Steel has never been more than a half-empty shell—all the decisions which matter are taken in Delhi by the Minister and his secretary, not by the Board.

* The Solvay Report, prepared by the West Germans, estimated the cost of setting things right at some 100 million rupees.

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When the Durgapur project was being discussed Sir Eric Coates, who headed the British Steel Mission, wanted to include in the contract an elaborate training scheme for erection and commission similar to the Russian one. But the Minister said no. There were other troubles, as indeed at Bhilai, and as a result, despite the comfortable margins and the special know-how, Durgapur was completed ten months behind schedule and costs rose from the estimated 1.15 billion to 2 billion rupees. (At Bhilai they rose from 1.1 billion to 2 billion.)

The first time there was real trouble at Durgapur, where the erection had hitherto been progressing smoothly, was in 1958 when the firm of Simon Carves was let down by its Indian associate Cementation Patil and some of the civil engineering works which had been put in or were found missing. It was obvious that there had been poor supervision on the part of ISCON. Concrete piles which ought to have been driven into the ground to reinforce the floor of one of the shops were either missing or shorter than the specification. Some slinging had taken place, ISCON had at once promised not only to make good but to stand legal action if necessary. This ought to have been enough to satisfy a school, but relations between Britons and Indians at Durgapur were so bad that Nehru, who naturally relied upon the official, had delivered a scathing attack on the British plan in Parliament. The British, who were furious at having been singled out for criticism though mistakes happen and that the only thing which matters is that mistakes should be discovered and corrected, were

However, the problem was nothing compared with what lay in store for Durgapur once erection had been commenced, and for this trouble the makers of the training programme was to be blamed.

TRAINING THE MAKERS OF STEEL

THE differences in the approach to training at Bhilai, Durgapur and Rourkela are most instructive and provide an object lesson for developing countries on how best to industrialize. However,

it must be said in fairness to all that some of the features which make Bhilai's training perfect cannot be duplicated outside Communist countries, even when trainees are taken under the wing of a government, be it democratic or totalitarian, for so long as private enterprise has its say, training must—unless it is of already highly trained people—be somewhat limited. Nevertheless training at Rourkela and Durgapur ought to have been given far greater importance than it was.

At Durgapur, despite Sir Eric Coates' plea, no provision whatsoever was made for what would happen to the plant after all the parts had been built and set working. Durgapur was a turn-key job, and once the key had been turned it was to be handed over, to the charge of Indians. There had of course been some sort of training programme for the engineers who had been recruited by Hindustan Steel either on their university degree in engineering or by poaching from IISCO, the Tata plant at Jamshedpur, and various engineering firms in India. The recruitment was suffering, like all Government recruitment under similar circumstances, from two defects. First the engineering graduate fresh from his book—and in India engineering studies are mostly done through book-learning because of the lack of laboratory facilities—is not an engineer in the true vocational sense and takes time to become one on the floor of the shop. On the other hand poaching from established and growing industries must, with the comparatively low scales of Government pay, mean that Government is getting the second rate who, if they are middle-aged, have risen as far as they will ever rise or who if they are still young, realize that they will not go much further. There is of course the exception of the odd idealist who is prepared to work harder on less pay for the good of his country. But since it is not possible to staff three steel plants with idealists the greatest care must be given to training so that, once completed, the steel plants can run as well as can be expected. Since it takes longer to train senior men than it does to build a steel plant, thought must be given to ways and means of finding people who can run the plant while the younger men grow into seasoned engineers capable of taking over.

At Durgapur—and indeed at Rourkela—no thought whatsoever had been given to who would run the plants. The training of the younger engineers had been left to the goodwill and

conscience of the British and German firms supplying equipment to the plants. In addition some training had, in the case of Durgapur, been organized by ISCON. The trainees who had been sent to Britain enjoyed their stay enormously; they felt at home in a country where they knew the language, they went to the theatre and the cinema, they made friends and learnt as much as they could, watching other people work in the plants. They were seldom, if ever, allowed to operate delicate or costly equipment, and trade secrets were jealously guarded from them.

In Germany the training had been less satisfactory still. In addition to the language problem and the loneliness of the trainees there had been the indifference of the German firms which did not bother unduly whether the trainees, housed in hostels attended the works or not.

'Can you imagine' exploded senior adviser to the Ministry of Steel, 'when I turned in Germany on an inspection visit I found our trainees busily playing bridge in their hostel, and this on a Monday afternoon if you please! I blew my top off and warned them that next time I found anybody away from the works, except during rest period or holidays, he would be sacked.' Still shaking with indignation he added, 'When I took the matter up with the Germans they were very uncooperative; their argument was something like this: we are not running a boarding school for little boys: if your trainees want to play truant that is nothing to do with us.'

At Bhilai, where training was taken very seriously not only as far as providing undisturbed conditions for every operation in the plant but in the selection of the trainees, things had been quite different. Training in the Soviet Union had not been much fun. The Indians had felt the cold. Moreover the combination of the language barrier, the fear of Russians to befriend outsiders and the shortage of private accommodation in which to entertain had left the Indians very isolated. However, training had been so intensive and so thorough that little time had been left over for grievances, especially since it had been obvious to all that the Government had gone out of its way to make them feel at home. Special arrangements had been provided for vegetarian diets, and fruit and green vegetables had been flown in from the Crimea. Above all Indians had been given the same responsibilities in the plants as their Russian counterparts and no

patents or trade secrets had been kept from them. Moreover so much time had gone into work that no time had been left over for indoctrination. Indeed, of the three plants Bhilai is the one which is free from Communist trade unionism. The Trade Unions at Bhilai are firmly Congress; at Rourkela and Durgapur there are Communist unions. The directive from Moscow to the Indian Communist party was 'hands off Bhilai. Concentrate on the other two plants'.

INNOCENTS ABROAD: RUSSIANS, GERMANS AND BRITONS IN INDIA

BHILAI, Rourkela and Durgapur provide an interesting contrast of the way in which Russians, Germans and Britons fit into an underdeveloped country. Before going into the tensions that can be created when a community of outsiders is artificially injected into any society it must be remembered that in each case local reactions were exacerbated by the fact that the steel plants and their townships are, by the very nature of their location—comparable to islands cut off from the mainstream of life by distance, pressure of work and except in Durgapur, language.

On the face of it Durgapur ought to have been the most successful and Bhilai the least successful case of acclimatization. In fact Bhilai turned out to be the most successful, Durgapur the least successful and Rourkela a pretty close second to Durgapur.

The Bhilai township, designed by a pupil of Frank Lloyd Wright, is grim functional, uninspiring; the only bit of luxury is the air-conditioned hostel-cum-hotel where visitors and some of the Russians live. Airconditioning is essential in Madhya Pradesh where temperatures can rise during the long summer to well over 100°F. in the shade. In addition to small quarters in the hotel-cum-hostel and in the junior hostel, a few of the very senior Russians live in houses which are no larger than those of Indian top managers. The Russians are very frugal. They do not

have servants, their wives do the cooking, the washing, the shopping and the cleaning to the amazement of the Indians who are not used to such Sahibs and Memsahebs. Because of the language barrier—mostly overcome in the course of duty with the help of interpreters—Russians and Indians do not fraternize much out of hours. In hours much of the friction which could arise from ill-tempered comment is avoided because expletives are lost upon undisciplined

Above all the Russians here under strict instructions from Moscow, came out to the letter the motto that when in Rome . . . Madhya Pradesh is a dry State. Hindustan Steel offered no permit to the Russians who refused them they privately console themselves with the thought that vodka is bad in tropical climes. The Russians are not lubricated. There is no Russian Club at Bhilai if they find like a game of tennis or a swim they go to the Bhilai Club which is open to all. If they are ill they go to the Bhilai hospital which is run by Hindustan Steel. However because of technical reasons there are a few Russian doctors and nurses in the hospital for the benefit of Indians also. The Russians pay for only three things Russian at Bhilai the school the cinema and the canteen. With a population rising to 100,000, 50,000 of them with their families there was a demand for a Russian school. This school did not create an impression because most of them do not want to have their children educated there.

The only representative person for Russian cuisine, open to all, only attract the Russians when they feel very homesick, so bad are the films and the television. Finally there is the Russian canteen. On all the Russians are in a scruffy mess run by a Punjabi contractor who produced the best horrible food. Even Russian forbearing has its limits and the second time I visited Buldakov one of the senior men invited me that he had cabled an ultimatum to Moscow either they find a cook or he would resign. On my next visit the cook had arrived and I was given an excellent meal in the Russian canteen, indeed far tastier than anything I ate in Moscow's most luxurious hotel. The Indians who can if they wish come to the canteen as guests do not wish to they much prefer their native curries to piroshkis, bitkis, alyonka or kisser.

In short, at Bhilai relations between Indians and Russians

were cordial if cool—the very prototype of polite coexistence. The Indians, who admire the technical superiority of the Russians, pity them for their lack of sophistication and political freedom, while the Russians pity the Indians for the poverty of their country and their caste system. The Indians smile indulgently at the timid attempts of the Russians—who are getting paid 2,000 rupees a month tax free in addition to their pay back home—to invest in jewellery, especially in diamonds so small and golden bangles so slim as to be unnoticeable in a land where women, even poor women, are adorned like Christmas trees. ‘Can you imagine, the wives go and buy those horrible cheap silk carpets made in Tokyo and hang them on the walls, and they have so little taste in clothes!’ said an Indian wife whose husband added, ‘They know a hell of a lot about steel but then they are not free. Do you know that recently two Russians committed suicide within a week of each other by jumping from the roof of the hotel. Nothing was said beyond that one had been drinking and that the other fell by accident but I believe they jumped to their death because they had been called back to Moscow.’

The Russians on the other hand are silently horrified by the conditions in which Bhilai's casual labour force lives and works, by the sight of women carrying earth on their heads in iron pans while their children crawl unattended in the dust. They feel genuinely sorry for people denied education and bound by caste and untouchability. ‘I cried and cried,’ said the wife of a Russian engineer, ‘when I saw that wonderful film *Untouchable*; to think that such things still exist, it is worse than our days of Tzarist days.’

When neither side has cause to be jealous of the other because each is convinced of its own superiority there is hardly room for tension. This and the language barrier go a long way to explain why relations between Indians and Russians are so good at Bhilai. The other reason is that the Russians, who are themselves used to a fairly primitive standard of living at home, make few demands at Bhilai and if anything, live in a more modest fashion than their Indian understudies.

In Roumkela where the German population was almost as large as at Bhilai, relations were very bad indeed despite the language barrier and the fact that, as in Bhilai, Indians did not want their children to go to the foreigners' school. For the ten-

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sion at Rourkela the Germans had themselves very much to blame. To begin with they built a £30,000 club, complete with bar and swimming pool, as well as a £100,000 air-conditioned hospital out of bounds to Indians. The excuse given to exclude Indians was that these were service facilities included in the contracts of all German overseas personnel. Since Britons and other Europeans working at Rourkela were entitled, by courtesy, to use both, the excuse did not fool anybody. It was small consolation to the Indians to be told that, in due course, when the Germans left Rourkela the Club and the hospital would be donated to India as a token of friendship.

Another source of tension was the fact that the best houses in the township had been allocated to the Germans and that German wives lived in a way which the Indians misguidedly refused to believe was the same as that which they led at home. The *hausfraus*, who were after all nothing but the semi-educated wives of skilled mechanics, had imported refrigerators, air-conditioners, electric toys and radiograms which the university educated wives of the Indian engineers could not afford. Little did the Indians realize that the rise in the standard of living in Germany had, by the mid-1930s, brought all those 'luxuries' within German middle class budgets.

To make matters worse the Germans and their wives kept complaining the whole time about the very real hardships entailed by living in the middle of Orissa. The Germans complained so much because they had no experience of empire building and valued *comfort*-living far more than any foreigner whom the Indians had ever come into contact with except the Americans.

However, despite the Club and the hospital and the *hausfraus*, tensions at Rourkela were technical rather than social. The Indians resented the way the Germans kept the mouth of things and did not hesitate to express their contempt for most things Indian.

At Durgapur the tensions were from the very beginning both social and technical. For this there were various reasons, the most important being that Britons and Indians could not forget the imperial past. The 'Lost of the White Man's Burden' was playing havoc at Durgapur. In addition there were human factors which owed nothing to the imperial past and finally there was the lack of training to which I have already referred.

The first time I went to Durgapur Brigadier Cox was in charge of erection. I had met Brigadier Cox years ago when he was in charge of the construction of the Sindri fertilizer plant where he had done an excellent job. From Sindri this retired army officer had gone to Africa. By the time he came to Durgapur he had grown somewhat autocratic, and age had not made him tactful. His relations with Hindustan Steel could not have been worse. For instance he had not bothered to inform the Indian side that Nehru was coming for lunch on his way to Calcutta. The people who took me round on the Indian side were not on speaking terms with the people on the British side and *vice versa*. I was almost treated as umpire, each side pouring its grievances into my helpless ears. If Cox was not the right man to deal with highly volatile and sensitive Bengalis, the Indian General Manager was not the right man to deal with steel. The project was still too young for anyone to be able to say whether it would have serious teething troubles. The only thing I noticed during my first visit was that there seemed to be very few Indians involved in the project outside Public Relations. Brigadier Cox's retort was that there was no need for many Indians to be trained since there were going to be only 500 Britons involved in Durgapur at the most, which proved that most of what was being done was being done by Indians and Britons in Indian towns in Calcutta and roundabout.

The second time I visited Durgapur Brigadier Cox had been replaced by Douglas Pell, a very able and dynamic steel engineer, but the atmosphere was just as strained though for quite different reasons and there was practically no mixing between Britons and Indians. The small English school run by ISCON which serves anyone for a fee, had started a running sore. At Rourkela or Bhilai nobody wanted to send their children to the foreigners' school, but at Durgapur by contrast there was great demand. Many Indian children, being less fluent in English than their British counterparts, had had to be downgraded. This had infuriated their parents who reacted by boycotting the school and sending their children to Hindustan Steel's free school where the medium of instruction was Bengali and Hindi. Fortunately the hospital did not add to tension; being so near Calcutta the British went there when they were really ill. But the Club was a source of great resentment though it was open to

anybody drawing more than £56 per month; this effectively excluded most Indians whose scales of pay were much lower than that of the expatriates. The senior Indians who qualified for admission resented being unable to afford whisky at £4 a bottle and were not used to the rough and tumble of Lancashire steel technicians. So they did not use the Club either. ISCON's contract provided that 80 per cent of the better houses should go to its own staff which never exceeded 350 Britons * This meant that while the township was being built Indians had no hope of getting the accommodation due to their rank, senior officials had to squeeze into junior houses, and I did not like it. The British who felt exhausted after a long day's work did not wish to make the extra effort required to befriend the Indians; they wanted to relax among themselves. The Indians who had no intention of entertaining the Britons, they had no room and no interests in common, nevertheless felt cheated and mistrusted because they felt excluded from British society and smarmed under some obscure inferiority complex. Yet those who patronized the Club's Saturday nights were bored stiff by the way the Britons and their wives passed the evening. Both Indians and Britons had forgotten that steel technique is not a numbers of the British Council or that building a steel mill is not the same thing as building an Empire.

At times indeed it might have helped if there had been a language barrier at Durgapur. During my second visit there was a real explosion of mutual ill-will caused by the young wife of one of the engineers who married herself a journalist. She had written an article about Durgapur for a steel magazine in Britain and had described how British women distributed Unicef skim milk powder to poor children while Indians concerned with storing the milk powder had stolen it and resold it in the bazaar. The article had become ranged back.

Foreigners injected into any society are bound to create irritation, like microbes injected into any organism. This is true of Americans in Europe, Russians in China, Frenchmen in Africa, Scotsmen in England, Indians in Nepal or Africa. However, in addition to the reaction of the Indians to the foreigners in the

* Proof, as Douglas Bell pointed out, that compared with the other two plants Durgapur was doing more than Indians. The number of foreigners in Rourkela and Bhilai has always been at least three times larger.

steel plants there were also the reactions of Indians to each other. These reactions are interesting because they are bound to occur, in varying fashion, whenever an industrial complex is started in an underdeveloped economy. Under-development is never even; some sections of society, indeed some parts of the country, are always in advance of others and thus better qualified to benefit from the new opportunities which industrialization creates.

Of the three steel plants Bhilai was the only one to be free from domestic tension. Bhilai is situated in a part of India so backward that there was nobody to resent the fact that no local talent had been recruited for the plant. The only employees for which the tribals of the region were fit was unskilled — earth-moving, sweeping, scavenging etc. In Rourkela, however, there was tension between Hindustan Steel and the Orissa Government over giving first priority for jobs to Orisias. Unfortunately for the Government of Orissa there were no qualified Orisias beyond clerks and not very good clerks at that, with the result that most of the better paid jobs went to Bengalis or Punjabis while earth-moving or sweeping and scavenging was left to the locals. As a result there had been a riot during which a few Punjabis had been killed in the township to the dismay of the Germans who felt justified in their belief that they were surrounded by savages.

Indeed, for some reason best known to the Municipal Administrator of Rourkela, the approaches to the town were far from edifying. Shams of the most sordid and most difficult to police, had been allowed to flourish all along the railway station greeting the visitor with their array of filth, unlicensed shops, street dwellers, unlicensed hawkers, beggars, squatters and stench. The explanation given by the harassed Public Relations Officer when he took me to the guest house was that the outskirts of Rourkela are a recruiting ground for casual labourers who come from the hinterland in search of work and that the township proper does not extend to the railway station which is out of bounds. Whatever the reason, it can never be wise to allow cesspools to grow side by side with vital industries, if things got out of hand it would be very difficult for the Government to protect the steel plant.

But it was in Durgapur that domestic tension was truly acute.

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Bengalis are not engineers by nature; they justly pride themselves on their culture, their taste, their addiction to music and poetry. On the other hand Sikhs and Punjabis are good at providing skilled and semi-skilled labour while South India is the traditional nursery for managers and technicians.

In the past Bengalis had been so allergic to working in industry, except as clerks, that most of the entrepreneurial talent which had gone into the development of Calcutta had been imported from Britain, Rajasthan or Gujarat while the labour force had come largely from Bihar. However things had now changed and there was great political pressure to employ Bengalis irrespective of their qualifications. This pressure—largely due to the influx of refugees from East Bengal—was understandable but it was making things very difficult in Durgapur where Bengalis thought that they would get the top managerial and technical jobs as well as all the others, so that resentment was growing all the time between Bengalis and non-Bengalis, be they British or Indian, with the result that Bengalis were hardly on speaking terms with non-Bengalis.

BOTTLENECKS OF FORCED GROWTH

To quadruple output in a fraction of steel in five years would be so vast an undertaking in a developed country that it has never been attempted. In an underdeveloped country like India such an ambitious programme is bound to create a shoal of bottlenecks. Therefore it can be argued that a phased expansion would have been preferable. The Indian argument, however, is that it is better to take the plunge first and to learn to swim for dear life once one is in the water because one learns quicker that way.

Before I left India in 1960 I paid a farewell visit to the three Government steel plants which I had seen grow from jungle; I also visited the two private sector plants of IISCO at Burnpur near Durgapur and IISCO in Jamshedpur which I had visited many times over the years. These private sector plants had each been doubling its capacity with financial and technical

help from abroad. The expansion of the private sector in steel had been most successful, except for odd strikes nothing had been allowed to hamper progress. However, I heard many of the same complaints at Burnpur and Jamshedpur as I did at Bhilai, Rourkela and Durgapur.

The core of the Indian second Five Year Plan had not been adequately developed to provide for the needs of the steel expansion. All five steel plants were desperately short of railway waggons because the expansion of the railways and its rolling stock had fallen gravely behind. Moreover the Railway Board was not in a cooperative mood. IISCO had complained to Delhi of the shortage of waggons. To teach IISCO a lesson the railways had sent whole trainloads unannounced in order to be able to complain that the steel plant was detaining the waggons because it had no stock ready for loading. The railways and the plants—with the exception of IISCO which has its own coal mine—were short of coal. The extension of the exploitation of the better grade coal mine had been reserved for doctrinaire reasons, for the public sector because K. D. Malviya the minister in charge was a doctrinaire. But the Government lacked men, experience and bureaucratic know-how and coal production had fallen way behind. The privately owned coal mines had not been allowed to expand except in the low grade coal-bearing areas and the director would not overrule to spend a lot of good money chasing bad coal. A lot of effort to deal the shortage of coal for the plants was put in coal warehouses in the public sector had also fallen behind their construction schedule. As a result of these delays the production of iron ore suffered. Thus at Burnpur the coal allocation to IISCO was supposed to contain 21 per cent ash. Each time the ash content went up by another 1 per cent there was a 4 per cent drop in the production of pig-iron and yet the percentage of ash kept creeping up without any corresponding reduction in the price of the coal which was fixed by the Government. By 1964 IISCO was getting coal with 24 per cent ash and a 12 per cent loss in the production of pig-iron—and in a desperate effort to reduce the loss was installing a cinder-plant.

The steel plants were short of electricity because the expansion of the demand for electricity had run wildly ahead of generation. Above all there was a terrific shortage of skilled

people for the new jobs. This shortage did not affect the private sector plants or Bhilai but it was causing havoc at Rourkela and Durgapur, both of which were in a mess.

At Rourkela the vacuum of manpower was obvious; soon foreign experts would have to be imported to man the plant as it got commissioned. This did not surprise me. What did however surprise me was what I found at Durgapur. There was only one senior steel man—a Mr Cameron in charge, and he had come after a six month interval during which Douglas Bell, who was completing the erection, had quitted himself trying at the same time—partially successfully indeed—to build and operate the steel plant. Finally a couple of weeks before my visit Bell had been relieved from operating the plant by the arrival of Cameron, a Colombo Planee, partly because the plant in such a mess that he felt ill and had to be medicalised on so no time leaving Douglas Bell to hold the fort on his own. In many years Durgapur had had three General Managers, not counting Bell or Cameron who were not General Managers anyway but technicians.

When I handed the Secretary of the Ministry of Steel over the lack of coordination between steel and transport he laughed with the sense of despair. On the contrary, we have done an admirable job of fighting bottlenecks. There is not enough coal, not enough water, not enough electricity, not enough iron-ore, steel is not enough, it is being produced. It all fits in very well. Think of the tragedy if there had been enough steel and no one else's so that it would rust in the yards. When he turned down despite all these bottlenecks the Government was going to go on with its programme of doubling each of the three steel plants I expressed grave concern. He dismissed it with a wave of the hand, 'we shall muddle through somehow'.

STEEL REVISITED

IN 1964 before setting out to look at the progress of India's steel expansion I called on the Steel Secretary in Delhi. He was new and less ebullient than his predecessor. Before I could say

anything he took the offensive. 'You must remember that this is a new industry, that it would not be fair to compare our costs with those of well established plants where the machinery has been written down a long time ago. Naturally our costs are high. People forget that the Americans have been in steel for a long time and that they have expanded progressively with the demand and have written off most of their equipment. One cannot expect new plants to be competitive.' I felt somewhat stunned.

'But,' I hazarded, 'don't you save a great deal on labour?'

He looked even more on the defensive. 'Labour is very cheap in India, its cost is negligible and we have to provide employment. After all the Plan is for the people, not the people for the Plan.' He was leaving in a couple of days for the Soviet Union to negotiate the terms of the fourth steel plant in the public sector, the Bokaro Steel plant which was going to be for four million tons of steel. I knew that his time was precious, and I thanked him for seeing me and for the help he was extending to me during my visit. He was a good man, I had never met him before but we had many common friends and I had heard nothing but praise for his solid sound common sense. As he walked me to the door he added, 'And remember you must make allowances for Indian conditions, climatic and human conditions, before you jump to conclusions.' The Government steel plants must have been in a worse mess than I had expected. Indeed, a glance at the following three tables which illustrate the flux of the affairs of Hindustan Steel is revealing.

No stock broker would recommend his clients to buy shares in a firm which changed its Chairman, its Secretary and its office with quite this rapidity.

Before setting out to visit the Government steel plants I went to see John McCracken, the General Manager of IISCO, at Burnpur. Burnpur had entered its third phase of expansion and its price for finished steel was the lowest of all the five steel plants.

Before taking my leave I asked him what questions to put as I went round the steel plants. He thought for a while and said, 'Ask what the price of steel ex mill is, ask how much reject there is, and ask what the ratio is between labour and machinery, keeping in mind that Durgapur was planned for 8,000 men and Bhilai for 7,000. The rest I trust you to find out for yourself. By

CHAIRMAN OF HINDUSTAN STEEL LIMITED (from 4.3.54 to 15.1.63)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Date of assumption</i>	<i>Date of relinquish</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
1. Asok Kumar Chanda* IA & AS (Indian Audit and Accounts Service)	4.3.54	22.9.54	Relinquished charge on appointment as Compt- roller & Auditor General of India
2. S. S. Kherra ICS.† (Indian Civil Service)	22.9.54	10.8.55	Ceased to be Secretary in Charge (Secretary of the Steel Ministry was Chairman of HSL)
3. S. Boothalingham ICS.‡ (Indian Civil Service)	10.8.55	14.4.58	Relinquished charge as Chairman on Govern- ment decision that a Secretary to a Depart- ment should not head an undertaking under its control (functional autonomy)
4. G. Pande IRSE.§ (also Deputy Chairman from 21.8.57-13.4.58 post abolished. (Indian Civil Service of Engineers)	14.4.58	15.10.60	Retired from HSL and became Vice Chan- cellor, Roorke University
5. J. M. Shrinagesh ICS.¶ (Indian Civil Service)	15.10.60	15.1.63	Term expired
6. M. S. Rao, ICS.¶ (Indian Civil Service)	15.1.63		

* A. K. Chanda had been the leader of the Indian Steel Mission.

† S. S. Kherra had been Secretary of the U.P. specially in charge of Community Projects.

‡ Boothalingham had been a general administrator in Delhi.

§ Pande was a railway man.

¶ Shrinagesh had been in charge of Hindustan Aircraft which was mostly at that time constructing gliders.

¶ Rao had been in charge of the Damodar Valley Corporation.

It is all in the Government reports, that is the price at which the steel is sold; it is a statutory price fixed by the Steel Controller in Calcutta. It bears no relation to the price of production. And how, I ask you, could it when there are in this factory designed for 8,000 people some 22,000 people loitering about; sleeping, creating obstructions, causing working hazards for those who work, playing dice in the shade of the sheds!*

'Can't you sack, cannibalize, waste, redeploy, retrain, do something?'

'You try! There are the Trade Unions, they would kick up such a shindy, they are already up in arms because there are not enough Bengalis employed. They want Bengalis everywhere. Whose fault is it if there are no qualified Bengalis in search of jobs? All the Bengalis with training have been absorbed. Don't forget that in addition to Hindustan Steel there is the expansion of Tata Steel, and the expansion of all sorts of engineering sectors which take up all the talent available.' Davies sipped cold water and sighed. 'If I had known! When my company asked me to come here on deputation as part of the British Aid to India, I would have said no, thank you. I should have stayed in Wales. Financially there is nothing in it by the time one has to send one's children home for their education and the wife too. One has no home life, no family life, no private life. It was all right for the I.C.S. They were young idealists going out for an imperial career, but steel men are different: they are middle-aged experts set in their way of life. Do you realize that I have been off from the works only three times in nearly two years. Yes, for three mornings I went sailing on the Marthon lake, at home I used to go swimming every week-end, but here I dare not go away. There is no telephone at the sailing club: anything can happen at the plant: something can blow up and if I am not there then what? I feel responsible. In Port Talbot there were plenty of other people, foremen with years of experience, one could go away, go on holiday, stay at home: the plant did not lie

* Bell, whom I met in London, said that only 15,000 men were actually employed in the plant and that the figure given by Davies included those employed in the township, etc. as well as those with their families. This of course equally applies to the other plants. Bell also said that the price of Durgapur steel is now the lowest in India, even after depreciation. And he pointed out with great pride that except for the maintenance engineers who are British the whole staff at Durgapur since his departure has been Indian, in sharp contrast to Rourkela and Bhilai.

on one's conscience the whole time as it does here. I get letters from home saying how nice it must be to visit India, the Taj and the Himalayas, etc. Visit India, my foot! In nearly two years I have sailed for one morning, three times. I have flown to Delhi twice because there was some crisis to be sorted out with the Ministry—and mind you I had to fill in my expenses in triplicate, and I paid for my own whisky; in Port Talbot things were not like that. One was treated properly, but of course it was not a Government department. I also had to show on my travel-sheet why my trip had been necessary. I did not even see the Red Fort; I went straight from the airport to bed and from bed to the Ministry and then to the airport! Sightseeing! And I have been twice to Calcutta, once to get something out of the customs who were sitting on precious needed spares and recently to see my wife and kids off at the airport. I did not even go into town, Bell was away on home leave, I could not be away from Durgapur for an extra minute.'

I had been listening to this outburst spellbound. 'But, don't you exaggerate your responsibility? McCracken, down at Burnpur, he goes sailing, he goes on holiday, he does not worry so much.'

'That's just it. McCracken is Burnpur, it has grown with him, he has been there for years, it is his baby; he knows every bit of the equipment and it gets serviced and maintained exactly the way he says and he recruits the staff that does the various sections, so he knows they are the right people and he does not have to face Parliamentary questions and Estimates Committees; so long as the shareholder and the Board are happy he is O.K. But I only came two years ago, the place was in a complete mess, you ask Bell; that's why he got me out. I do not have with me *my* team, people who have grown into it with me and the plant. I do not recruit or post. Posting is done by Hindustan Steel. They have their own ideas about recruiting. The other day, at Bhilai they appointed the superintendent in charge of blast furnaces to the blowing mill; when you go there you just ask the General Superintendent, a Russian what he thinks of that! Nobody in their right senses would do such a thing, a blast furnace is about as near a blowing mill as I am Bengali. But Hindustan Steel runs things in the 'bureaucratic way'; promotion is done on seniority and 'where possible' regional

siderations. There are good people of course, but then there are many who are not so good and a steel plant is a very delicate thing; if it is not properly maintained it goes quickly out of order. Even more serious, production can suffer, and believe me, it can suffer in such a way that one does not know whether one is producing at full capacity or not. Capacity is a very elastic concept. I have no doubt you have heard how some plants produce 110 per cent, well, that is what happened in Sindri, for a while. And now it is not even working at 60 per cent because nobody remembered to maintain and service it, the same has been true of the Bokaro power station where they have had trouble for lack of maintenance. Machines are not donkeys, they cannot be flogged, they have to be nursed! And that is what worries me most because I do not get the feeling that the young engineers here, the Indians I mean, realize the importance of servicing and maintenance. They tend to think that we make a lot of fuss for nothing, perhaps to justify our tax-free pay. Well, let me tell you one thing I have with me here a few Britons who have come attracted by the tax free stuff and they are most discontented, they feel almost cheated. Their tax free salary does not go very far, and they feel absolutely trapped here in Durgapur. True we are within an hour by plane from Calcutta but they can never get there because they are needed here. And those who manage to get there cannot afford to stay at the Great Eastern Hotel and have a fling. So what is there in it for them? To work and wait for their contract to expire and go home. Not one of them wants to stay on. Before coming out they let their house, they sell their car because they could not afford on their salary to bring it out and pay the import duty. So they go to work by Hindustan Steel bus, they come home and if they want to go to the club they have to cycle. There are only a few of us Britons like Bell or myself, who get a car with the job. Besides, after a long day's work and the day is long because there are so many things to do which in a developed country would be done by somebody else, they go home. They cannot even watch the telly and their wives grumble because the babies have prickly heat or dysentery. And the wives are stuck between their home and the club if they do not live too far from the club. They would much rather do their own housework and live round the corner from their family and the Odcon and the supermarket.

We are makers of steel, not intellectuals. My wife and I and the girls, we managed to enjoy ourselves a bit more. Being Welsh we are musical, we all play something; so there was chamber music. But the eldest daughter could not get piano lessons here, and she is very good at the piano; and as they got too old for the local school we had to send them away. Well, most of the others don't even have music to cheer them up.'

I was beginning to sympathize. Larmer at Durgapur was like living in a camp. Durgapur is not beautiful, there is nothing to look at, hardly anything to do except work or play bridge or wallow in the club swimming pool. Distances between the township's sectors are truly cutting off when the temperature is about 100 F. in the shade with 98 per cent humidity. McCracken by comparison lived his life in India where he had an integrated place, and could relax to a far greater extent. After all, for months there had been nobody senior in charge at Durgapur, just Bell, keeping one eye on the erection side and the other eye on the production side. How wise of the Russians to insist on bringing the number of men they thought necessary and on telling the Government of India that they would keep them there until they were satisfied that Indians could replace them. Bell, had he been there, would have argued that Durgapur was doing a better job of training than Blair because there were only thirty Britons left in Durgapur—mostly maintenance engineers while at Bhilai there were 1,700 Russians left.

As he walked me to the door of his little office room Davies suddenly remembered something. 'I told you I never went on holiday, that is not quite true. Once, last year, I was going to take a long weekend and fly to Darjeeling with Mrs Davies and the girls. Well, I got as far as the landing strip. There was a messenger running after me, unable to do the works, mechanical trouble. I never went to Darjeeling. Here when something goes wrong you have to make do yourself or close down, it takes ages to get the part. It has to be imported, maybe from Britain, it is flown out and then the customs sit on it, or perhaps the Reserve Bank does not issue a permit to get it as quickly as it ought to. Then maybe it gets mislaid in the customs and you have quite a time getting it out. By the time it is with you, ready to be fitted in it has taken anything between ten days—if you are lucky, and three weeks or more, if you are not—and all along you are on

tenterhooks in case something blows up or production suffers. But the Indians don't understand that sort of thing; they are government servants! They clock in, they work office hours, they do not dirty their hands. Do you know that the man who operates a machine here does not clean it, this is done by the cleaner and there is 30 per cent of absenteeism amongst the engineers. No, I do not mean the operators, the semi-skilled, I mean the *engineers*. They will take the whole of their leave,* then they will take extra leave because of a wedding, a funeral, a family ceremony, the sowing season and they will extend their leave with a medical certificate. As a result there is 30 per cent absenteeism amongst them not just the unskilled and semi-skilled, we have to curvy at least three engineers where in Britain two would do! If he was not exaggerating I could well understand how he must have been irritated that his Indian colleagues did not share his sense of devotion to the job in hand. However, his figure of 30 per cent absenteeism for qualified engineers did surprise me. In business and indeed in government there was no equivalent absenteeism. Indian civil servants, Indian railway engineers, Indian managers led to my knowledge always behaved in exactly the same way as their Western counterparts. The only difference I can think of is that it is more difficult to stagger leave in India than in the West because there is, for instance, a wedding season. The cycle of agricultural operations undoubtedly plays a great part in the absenteeism of the lower run of employees everywhere in India but I cannot remember having ever met a Hindustani ever works manager or a Collector of a district who had to go home either for harvest or to repair the roof of the family house. Yet the figure of 30 per cent absenteeism even in the higher ranks was confirmed at Rourkela by a German who even said that many engineers pay clerks to remove their leave papers in order to go on leave on full pay twice—and at Bhubai too the Russian General Superintendent said that amongst the highly qualified absenteeism was 30 per cent. It is of course possible that he had skilled mechanics rather than fully fledged engineers in mind. And I met in Bom-

* Leave at Sindri (C.I. leave) — 15 days on full pay, 10 days medical leave on full pay — 10 days on half pay — 10 days casual leave on full pay and 12 days paid holiday.

† Bell assured me in 1965 that this does not apply to senior engineers, at least at Durgapur.

by a professor of sociology who explained this staggering absenteeism in the following way at a discussion meeting of the Reserve Bank of India's Economist Group:

'You must remember that we are a people whose primary duties are our duties to the family, the clan, the caste, the group. On our performance of those duties depends not only our getting married but our sisters getting married, our parents being able to look their neighbours in the face. And even from the economic point of view it is all very well on having a job in a steel mill as an engineer. But we are part of a joint-family which is based on agriculture. Our duty to help at harvest time or what have you is paramount especially since our studies which have been long and expensive have usually been paid for by the joint-family, sometimes by the elder brother who has stayed in the village. So it is only natural that he should expect us to rally round when he needs us on the land. What we need is a psychological revolution. Only then can we enjoy the fruits of the industrial revolution.'

Government should treat its steel engineers the way it treats its administrators and business its managers: if they are absent sack them. This is a very effective method for bringing about the desired psychological revolution. The proof that one need not carry extra staff was given to me — though I did not require it — at Jamshedpur where the General Manager of Indian Tubes told me with great pride that there were three more people employed in England at Corby in a sister plant than in his plant. Maurice had always told me that the number of people employed in India depended, as far as the works were concerned, on the process and on the pace of the machines. The difference was due to the lower degree of mechanisation of the handling process, like people loading by hand instead of conveyor belts. In the office, at the managerial and engineering level there were certainly fewer people involved in the Indian operations than at home, with the result that they had to work much harder and much longer hours; the only place where work was perhaps slacker was in the clerical section — where many things are still done by hand which in Britain are done by machines.

That evening I was taken to one of the little clubs — each sector has its own little club because of the distance between sectors — where the engineers meet to play bridge, chat and drink coca

cola. It was a club like so many up-country clubs where the Collector's wife is keen on getting people together. We soon moved on to the house of one of the engineers. His wife wore her still new wedding sari; she welcomed me and we all sat down, a dozen of us, in the little drawing-room furnished in pleasant modern style. As always, the wives sat on one side, the husbands on the other. I sat between the two. A decade ago there would have been a real gulf between the two sides with nothing much to talk about. This was no longer so. The women still sat together, but they took part in the conversation. Bashfulness was conspicuously absent. The bride was being teased by the other wives—none of them very old wives. I had been told by the head of the hospital at Durgapur when he balked at my suggestion that he should start a Family Planning Centre, 'But we have a very young population here; they do not need family planning, not for a decade.' I tried to argue that there was room even with a young population for family spacing but got nowhere because that worthy doctor was more preoccupied with curing the sterility which resulted, as he blushinglly confided, 'from the way our young men have been carrying about (sic) when they went to Britain on training. They bring back V.D. and then their wives have miscarriages or do not get pregnant at all. I tell you it is a real shame those goings about abroad; it hurts me to have to tell you, you a lady and from abroad, about these things, but then I am a doctor.'

Everybody in this drawing-room was so young, except for the host's mother who had come to help her daughter-in-law to settle in, that I felt very old. The women were talking of how they had told their parents that they would only consider proposals of marriage from steel engineers or engineers working in a steel mill. Now they were a bit bored in Durgapur. They were a bit scared too because the houses were so open, and there had been a wave of thefts recently. But it was far better than being married to a District Officer. As one of them put it: 'At least there are all of us, we are a community; we can make friends. We are all of the same age, and there are no old village ladies around to gossip about our ways of doing things. And our husbands work office hours, and they do not go away on tour, and there is always the chance of our being sent abroad with them when they go for further training.' The hostess blushed and added

with a charming smile, 'and there is the glamour of being part of the new India.'

The ladies obviously were full of the right spirit; had it not been for their saris and the flowers in their hair we might have been in Newtown anywhere in England—even the casual tables were right.

Regretfully getting back to shop, I threw my question at the male side of the room 'Why do you have so many people working in Durgapur?' I noticed many labourers just hanging around, and there were even two or three asleep which must be dangerous.'

The Deputy Superintendent of the blast furnaces, my host for the evening, answered, 'We are overstaffed, but then you must remember many factors. First we are new in steel making, we followed the advice given by IISCO who had more experience. Then there is such a thing as Indian conditions, the climate, the low stamina of our people who are underfed and who suffer from lack of proteins over the generations, then there are the trade union. At Pimpri the Government Borel plant, there are 135,000 employees of worker yet it is a continuous chemical process indeed by comparison with Pimpri we are doing not badly. (When I'd over past Pimpri shortly afterwards the plant was closed there was a general strike because the union did not approve of the new manager's policy of streamlining labour.) My host went on 'Then there's the need to train people on the job for future expansion and for the projected 1 million ton Borel steel plant. But above all, Mrs Zinkin, you must keep in mind that there is chronic unemployment in India, therefore it does not matter if we are overstaffed; on the contrary it is a way of providing jobs, labour is so cheap that it does not matter compared with the cost of raw materials, which with the machinery is most of the cost of producing steel.'

The discussion had started in earnest. The argument about climate I had no use for. It is no hotter in India than in West Virginia which has some of the biggest steel mills in America. It is so hot in a steel mill anyway that the climate hardly comes into it. The personnel officer had to agree but countered with the low stamina of the people operating the plant. Yet productivity in a streamlined mechanized integrated plant like Durgapur is linked to the degree of mechanization rather than to the

stamina of the personnel. The Personnel Officer was not happy, he pleaded: 'You must grant me the trade unions, to make matters worse they are not only politically active, they are also regionally active.' A sudden coolness invaded the drawing-room.

My host broke in: 'What nonsense you are talking, is he not a brother?' he pointed to a dark faced young man whose wife had an unmistakable air from the South. Krishnan, who had been pointed at, nodded enthusiastically: 'Yes they do not hold it against me that I am from Madras and not from Bengal, but then these are the enlightened people. Seriously speaking, it is no good pretending that one could have, say, a Sikh or a Punjabi as Personnel Officer in Durgapur. I am not proposing a change, I mean theoretically. I think you will all agree that if there was a non-Bengali Personnel Officer or Public Relations Officer, people would not like it.'

The Sikh electrical engineer in the corner nodded his turban in silent approval. The Personnel Officer hastened to explain that this is because there are so many Bengali clerks. Time had come to change the subject of the conversation. I asked about the training for the expansion and for Bokaro. A young man who turned out to be a senior accountant chimed in: 'In any case, it does not matter if we employ too many people. India has too many people and not enough jobs, so Durgapur is performing a welfare service in multiplying employment. And since Indian labour is very cheap, compared with anywhere else in the world, it hardly adds to the overheads of steel making when one carries a few thousand extra staff. I discovered how wrong he was when I visited IISCO and asked how their cost of labour compared with their cost of raw materials. IISCO still had twice as many men as it required. After the war there had been three times as many but by careful cooperation with the trade unions and by lack of recruitment the number had slowly been brought down to two men instead of three. At IISCO I was told by a director that the cost of labour was roughly one third of the total cost, it equaled the cost of raw materials for each ton of steel. At Durgapur—indeed at Roukela or Bhilai—with a ratio of three to one the cost of labour must have exceeded the cost of raw materials by a considerable margin, and gone a long way to explain why I was told repeatedly that Indian steel made in public sector plants was more expensive than landed American

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steel inclusive of duty. This is untrue. Indian steel is in fact cheaper than American steel but, as in the case of corruption, experts did not hesitate to make baseless statements.

As I was going to take leave my host asked if I had met Bell. 'Unfortunately, I missed him in Calcutta and he is now in Delhi for something.' Again there was tension in the little drawing-room. 'Why do you ask?'

'Nothing, I just thought perhaps he could have answered your questions. But you have met Mr Davies the General Superintendent. He must have been telling you.'

'Yes, I have met him. A nice man, very dedicated.'

'Yes, he is a good man, but we do not need him here any more, we can do the job ourselves. Ask anyone in this room. We have been fully trained. Don't let them run the works, they only supervise and fix it all. When they need duty, the plant continues to operate and who operates it? We do. And when they go off on leave or to Delhi or when they need, we run the plant. No, we don't need them any more. We can do the job ourselves. They all need it. It was thought at the beginning to run the plant in this way, but the plant was fully commissioned *last* year. The other engineers who are here are here for the expansion you must tell me that women can make all that difference to a machine of steel. He obviously did not feel that the thirty maintenance engineers were important.

They were talking exactly like young trainees the world over who think they know it all. Indeed feel that the business would run so much better if they instead of the old ossified block-heads, had their way. I am unable to decide between what they and Davies said and I asked the Russian in charge at Bhilai how long it would take to train the top Indians before all the Russians could leave Bhilai. Without any hesitation he answered that even in Russia it takes ten years to make a steel engineer who can be given full responsibility. 'He may look all right after two or three years is an understudy, but then the machinery is worth such a lot of money that in Russia they would not dream of making a man responsible under ten years. Supposing something does go wrong. It is on his decision, on his flair, on his ingenuity that the whole fate of the plant may rest. And even in ten years he may not have experienced anything like what is going wrong, but one cannot postpone giving responsibility

forever. There comes a time when one must run risks. Ten years is the absolute minimum, I mean ten years as understudy to the number one in that particular section of the steel plant.'

On my way to Jamshedpur I stopped over for the night at Ranchi where I was taken round the Russian heavy engineering plant fully one entire Five Year Plan behind schedule – a burning sore to the pride of the Russians who had to keep mum since the fault was India's. I also had breakfast with Raju who had been Chairman of the Jharkhand plant at Pimpri when I lived in India. From Pimpri Raju had gone to be the fourth General Manager of Rourkela. Durgapur too had had four General Managers) before being made chairman of the public sector coal washeries. Breakfast was short as I had to catch a plane for Jamshedpur. Raju listened with sympathy when I explained why I had missed Bill at Durgapur.

'He must not allow troubles in his club at my cost, that's what I always say, crush the trouble in the hotel and then you have no trouble. When I was General Manager of Rourkela six workers belonging to a union were killed and only one was to be recognized, I said "nothing doing for such a union but wait for Government-backed union. And I let the plant run the way it was. Then in they put in after me but I recognized the union and I had plenty of trouble.'

In the plane, one of Hindustan Steel's wing planes, I met an old friend from IISCO. He had become a senior adviser to the Steel Ministry and was on his way from Ranchi to Calcutta, where he had to catch a plane to go to Germany. He kindly agreed to drop me out of Jharkhand on his way. We had a long chat in the plane and he waved me goodbye. I could still see the grin with which he had said: 'Ask them about the change of shifts at Rourkela and also about the rate of replacements and repair. What he had taken me to the core was the enthusiasm with which this man in a role who once had been spent in the private sector spoke of the Russians. 'Give me a deal with the Communies every time! It is my advice to the Government of India. To begin with there is no hanky panky about trade secret, patent etc. They may violate the secrets of others, but you get the benefit of their violation and you remain correct. Because for them it is a matter of life and death. I mean for the men on the spot – and for the country a matter of inter-

national prestige, whatever happens they make it good at their own expense. They don't even waste time arguing whose fault it was in the first place if a thing breaks; all they say is "it's broken", then they cable to Moscow and fly another one out by return of plane, they do not even charge for the part. Give me the Communies every time! They do not use their working here to indoctrinate, not a bit of it—they are far too busy working. Besides the chops they send out no engineers, not politicians; no, it is quite safe. The Russians are prepared to build us the Bokaro steel plant which the Americans have just refused to build because it is going to be in the public sector. I am very fond of the Americans and would have liked to see an American steel plant in India just for the visible effect of doing so, but I must say that I am glad that Bokaro came to be Russian, at least there is going to be no trouble there, no terminations. If the Americans had agreed that there would be a great deal of heart-burn on the wages and conspirators' nonsense about the wives and then requirements etc. the Russian poor lambs, are no trouble. And they need more good steel engineers. And used to running it. Give me the Russians every time.'

At Jamshedpur I was met by an old acquaintance, Mr Mukerjee the Public Relation Officer of IISCO. Whenever I meet Mr Mukerjee on the one or the other since 1950, I am reminded of Indian communal politics. The first time I met Mr Mukerjee he told me the story of his wife's great-niece. The poor girl had been married at the age of eleven to a dying man. The groom was a Brahmin. There was a shortage of Bengali Brahmins of the right kind and so the girl would have had to remain a spinster. Had she not been married off by her loving parents to that putrid man who at each in his seventies and married many times, was actually so near death that he had been taken out of his house and conveniently laid out near the cremation ground when the marriage ceremony was performed.

The man duly died a few hours later and the parents of the child bride decided that suttee having already been abolished she must have had a better haven and be made to lead the life of a widow. Her brother came to her rescue. One of them kidnapped her and took her by boat to Calcutta where he handed her over to the Brahmo-Samaj centre of Ram Mohan Roy. Meanwhile the other brother acted as decoy to distract the

irate father who, determined to avenge his family's honour, was chasing the fugitives, caught up with his son instead and killed him. The girl and her brother lived happily ever after. She married a man nearer her own age and became one of India's first Bengali Hindu women to get educated in the modern way. Eventually she became an educationalist in her own right. Whenever I meet Mr Mukerjee I think of that father chasing his own son along the rivers of Bengal and killing him for the family's honour.

There had been serious anti-Muslim riots in Jamshedpur and things had not yet fully returned to normal. The Personnel Director of IISCO felt very sorry for these Muslims. However, he had learnt one lesson from the upheaval of the communal riots—the first to take place in the peaceful township of Jamshedpur. ‘During it’—like everybody else—we hired indiscriminately—we found ourselves with three times the labour force we should have had. We had been trying to reduce our labour force ever since we were not recruiting when we doubled our capacity at the beginning of the Second Plan with help from Kaisers; we did not take on extra staff. Yet we reckon that we still have about 900 employees too many, which is why the staff stayed home during the week of the riots; its production did not suffer. So we have taken the decision not to recruit anybody for our next expansion which I am started soon. In fact we have already taken a lot of people off the works to retrain them for the expansion. It is always a bad thing to dump people on the job. It means that even though your work load is too light and when you increase the work load you will have to deal with the trade unions. If on the other hand you retrain by just hanging around you are asking for trouble to begin with—extra obstruction and create risks on the site. So it is better to pull them off the works, to divert those who never do not need by giving them special training in other crafts etc. It is thus the great advantage of making it possible to promote people without upsetting expectations. You train a young man in a job after all voluntarily—and then he can be promoted over an older man who did not wish to get trained, it gives you elasticity.’ He informed me that the recruiting office set up for Bokaro had, despite what I had been told, already begun recruiting staff. ‘They will have havoc there, what with people from the extra labour force in the three steel

plants and extras from outside, and all trained differently, all discontented! They ought to sieve off the extra men in the three plants, give them courses, and keep them training together, even theoretical training, then take them to Bokaro and let them watch and help with the erection and be trained by the Russians for the commission of the plant.'

The TELCO works where Tata and Mercedes-Benz make trucks and locomotives had not sufficiently recovered from the riots for me to be taken round; they were too riddled with tensions. I was nevertheless taken to see their Public Relations Director whom I had met before and who spent over an hour telling me what his company was doing in the way of Family Planning. He was indeed right to be proud of the dynamic and imaginative way in which TELCO was tackling the greatest of all the challenges to India's future: population explosion. Charts, pamphlets with propaganda material in all the many Indian languages spoken by TELCO's employees were used to exhort people to plan and limit their families. The charts which showed the number of TELCO employees who had been sterilized looked like production charts and were, he said, plastered all over the works and the clubs. The pamphlets on the other hand were included in the weekly pay envelope of the employees. After three children the company advised the men to get themselves vasectomized and, as an extra inducement in addition to convalescence leave on full pay, offered them a 200 rupees bonus. The names of those who volunteered were given wide publicity; they were interviewed, photographed and made as much fuss of in the TELCO journal as if they had been Stakanovites in the Soviet Union. I still have with me a charming pamphlet with a photograph showing four young TELCO employees holding hands, smiling into the camera under the caption, 'These healthy, nappy and good looking TELCO workers have all had vasectomy operation in our TELCO dispensary.' The vasectomy campaign was very new and already over 100 operations had been performed. Considering that by 1980 India's population is expected to be of the order of 800 million one can only regret that TELCO's dynamic approach to the problem was so unique. TISCO's approach was much more restrained, and therefore much less effective. Social workers visited mothers with more than three children and advised them to attend the family planning clinic which TISCO

runs in the various sectors of Jamshedpur. However, so far few women had made regular use of the clinics because of the absence of a real incentive, the men only got fifty rupees for the operation and so they were not coming forward in large numbers. Female sterilization, unless it is done at the time of a delivery, is a major operation and even when it follows a delivery requires hospitalization which is not always easy to arrange in India. Thus one of the lady welfare officers told me how one of her clients who already had four children and wanted no more had to wait for another four to be born before her tube could be tied. First the hospital had been full then for her sixth confinement the doctor was away on leave and during the seventh confinement she was too much in pain.

Obviously what India needs is more of F.F.C.O.'s salesmanship, a crash programme for the insertion of intra-uterine devices as well as propaganda backed by an intensive distribution network of condoms to make them as available as matches and kerosene, both of which can be obtained practically everywhere with the whole year round. Unfortunately except at Jamshedpur and except for one lady doctor at Rourkela and a commercial business executive in Bombay, nowhere did I find men or women who seemed to appreciate the importance of the problem. Those officially involved in Family Planning were still treating the emergency as if it were a pilot project in which what mattered above all was to collect statistical returns and not achieve performance. Despite every pretence to the contrary the government in India were merely to go with Family Planning as if it were a virus on their side.

At Rourkela the situation there is worse than it had ever been before. There have been no serious incidents there also and the tension still in the air. Many of the Germans disgusted by the scene that had been forced to witness had broken their contracts and returned to Germany, that they amongst savages. Indians and foreigners were particularly not on speaking terms. The General Manager was away but his deputy was far from impressed and he was in the luck of a despise and interest in the plant. The Public Relations Officer was the worst I have ever met. One German consultant who gave me a drink at the club dropped a sad comment on the way the plant was run. 'Absenteeism is over 50 per cent and they do not hesitate to get faked medical certificates, even the engineers would you believe

it! They pay the doctor in their village five rupees. I really find this extraordinary. But the worst of it all, if you ask me, is not that but the complete lack of a permanent trained working labour force even in the higher technical jobs. The driver of a slabbing-mill is liable to take casual leave at any time! One is perpetually retraining.'

A visit to the works was indeed an extraordinary sight. In the cold rolling mills which are the feature of Rourkela which makes it so special and so different from Bhilai and Durgapur there was only one rolling mill working on one day. One mill was stopped because its foundations had developed a flaw and were flooded; they could not be dewatered until pumping equipment arrived. The second rolling mill was not working because a part was broken and they were waiting for a spare to arrive from Germany. The third cold rolling mill was working. But it was rolling very slowly, almost a half by his industrial slow motion camera pace. There was such a lack of co-ordination between the operation of the heavy plate mill and the scanning mill that there was a pile up of materials. When I inquired why this was so I was told that a severe bottleneck lay in the output of the mill. The bottleneck was caused by the flange which only sat on one side of the line so that the material had to be run in a single file; this meant a 50 per cent reduction in output.

I went to see the person in charge of the cold rolling mill. An American of the town-theory of the strike had. He was at Rourkela because as he put it 'they pay me more here than I would get in the States'. His job was fairly unsatisfactory. He operated the cold rolling mill which on one day and replacements were the responsibility of a German firm. There were constant quarrels between the two as to who was responsible for what. Defects of fabrication and in all ways were naturally the responsibility of the German firm, defects arising from operations that of the American firm and through them of Hindustan Steel. The German firm was not altogether without grounds in protesting that breakage should not all be put at their door. The rate of breakage in the cold rolling mill at Rourkela was, according to what I was told by an exasperated German, no less than 250 per cent compared with between 5 to 10 per cent in Germany for a comparable plant. Moreover the parts which broke at Rourkela were often quite different from the parts which normally broke

for standard quality tin-plates. As much as 70 per cent of Rourkela's flat products and tin-plates was substandard he said. However, nobody at Rourkela seemed unduly bothered by the fact that the world's best, most up to date, cold-rolling mill should be producing at 30 per cent of capacity and 70 per cent of that sub-standard. People were far too busy quarrelling. The Americans were blaming the Germans. The Germans were blaming the Americans and the Indians. The Indians were blaming the Germans.

On my way to Bhilai I shared a railway compartment with an elderly and very fat Sikh. We began to chat; he was a contractor supplying Bhilai with limestone. 'So you too are going to Bhilai. Are you visiting a friend? Is there anything I can do for you? I am a very important local businessman, I am at your disposal.' I thanked him and promised to drop in if I was in need of anything. Keeping my purpose deliberately vague I asked how things were going at Bhilai. This started him off and he kept talking all the way to the station for Bhilai.

Things were awful. Soon the steel plant would have to close down and that would serve the General Manager, Inderjit Singh, right for trying to be a wiseguy. 'Until that busybody came we always carried supplies forward for six to nine months; after all India is a monsoon country and you never know what can happen when it rains, even if the limestone is near the steel mill. But because he is a boy-polloy (sic) of the Audit and Accounts Service he went through the books with a fine tooth-brush and decided to cut on the inventory. Now we run from mouth to mouth with supplies of limestone hardly three months in hand.' I failed to understand what difference it made to him whether he supplied six or three months stock since he had to keep replenishing; perhaps the difference came in the amount of interest he made on the money laid out. He was not very good at explaining, his English like my Hindi being somewhat limited. 'You watch and see, I tell you from mouth to mouth, we shall ruin Inderjit Singh; all contractors we are after the skin of his neck.' He took out a pan leaf, finished it, folded it and began to chew. 'Yes of his neck, we will get him!' Under Indian circumstances to thus incur the wrath of contractors is a testimonial of honesty. I was told by the Russian General Superintendent that there were adequate stocks of limestone. Inderjit had saved

government money on superfluous inventory. Inderjit was not in Bhilai, he had gone to Moscow with the Secretary for Steel to negotiate the Bokaro contract.

As always Bhilai was in heavenly contrast to Rourkela. Everybody was alert, keen, hard at work. Yet everything was not perfect there either, despite the fact that Inderjit left the running of the production to the Russian General Superintendent who was working directly under contract for Hindustan Steel. The Russian took me round the plant with great pride and love for the machines. He was delighted to meet someone who spoke Russian, who had just been to Moscow. He spoke with perhaps greater freedom than if there had been an interpreter.

When I asked him why there were over 100 men at Bhilai when it had been designed for 50, he shrugged his desolate shoulder. In my country a man who works with a machine worships his machine, he is attached to it, he looks after the machine, he cleans it, he loves it. Nature. Indians don't clean their machine, they have to have someone else have to be all sorts of people who would never enter a P.W. plant because they are people who do not have that attitude. Take absenteeism, for example. I have never seen anyone and say "I must take a day off, my wife is sick, my mother is ill, my son is in the village." I asked about the staff of 1000 people at Bhilai compared with the staff of 500 at Rourkela. He said that it was comparable with what he had seen in Rourkela. He said that in 1955, when Russia had a record production of steel, "Say it is 20 per cent more than Russia could be about 5 to 7 percent. The accounts clerk would find that the turning of a blast furnace took 20 days, that is twenty days more than in Russia. In Rourkela it had taken eight months to rebuild a blast furnace, when there were only two of the blast furnaces working. I have not told you there is always one blast furnace out of commission here because of inefficient."

The Russian smiled, "It takes hard work to make an industrial people out of a peasant society, as we can do well know." When I asked him what he thought of posting the Superintendent in charge of the blast furnaces or the blowing mills his smile vanished. "To begin with, in Russia steel mills are never run by generalists. In Russia we would *never* have done such a

thing, never! The two posts are quite different things altogether. One can promote either man to be in charge of the plant, in due course, but they are not interchangeable; each one is a specialist. Such a transfer can only be done by people who do not understand the operation of a steel plant. I was not consulted.'

Later that afternoon I had tea with Inderjit's wife and we went to watch a football match, she had to give away the Cup. The Russians were there too, the interpreters, the Russians in charge of erection and the Russians still in charge of the operations, including my friend the General Superintendent. What struck me was the casual way in which they mixed with the crowd, without letting protocol stand in their way as it did in the way of the Indians. There were chairs and benches of honour for distinguished company, but the Russians preferred to squat at ease with the crowd.

From the football ground we drove to the community centre run by the ladies of Bhilai for the improvement of workers' wives. A very imaginative scheme to which both Indian and Russian women contributed their supervision and patience. Women who want to earn a small income by working at home can come to the centre where they are given free sewing lessons and then are issued with ready cut clothes which they can stitch, on the centre's sewing machines if they do not have their own. When the garments are finished they are paid for their work. Boys and girls school uniforms are sewn at the centre which supplies Bhilai's schools as well as other places. The women can earn quite a tidy amount in their spare time. Only at Bhilai was there such a centre.

That evening at dinner I was guest of honour in Inderjit's house. I asked the Personnel Officer why he had transferred the superintendent of the blast furnaces to the blowing mill and vice versa. A pleasant young man, he lit his cigarette and answered frankly. 'Well it was a very bad mistake for which I must take most of the blame. You see, I was faced with a personality problem. The superintendent of the blast furnaces had a difficult character, he had married above his station and developed an inferiority complex as a result of which he did not get on well with the people in the blast furnace, I thought that if I gave him a break and sent him to the blowing mill he might turn over a new leaf. My calculation has proved wrong; he is just as much a

problem as he was before, I am seriously worried about what I am to do with him next.'

My visits to the steel mills have convinced me that the Indian Civil Service admirable though it may be is not suited to the running of steel or any government industry unless it is decided to take an administrator and give him a full-time career in the running of one industry. Take an able young man and make him *gore*, with say Durapur just the way McCracken had been *gore* with Burnpur or Munce with Unalver. To post a man to a power-plant one day to a steel mill the next and then to coal or other industries. He has no stake in the development of power, he does not put it up for which he cannot take credit. Moreover the chances are that he does not understand the principles involved. Men to be entrusted with essential to lay in Indian civil service must be on each big public sector construction, on the other hand, a specialist who does not interfere with the special aspects of the project. Put him in charge of recruitment, remuneration and give him a staff to run away with the responsibility and to be entrusted to the work of the plant. To muddle it the way the Government of India is set about is merely to squander taxpayer's money. When one remembers that there is a budgetary and financial record of government expenditure in the *Raj* and the Ordinance Gazette one has to understand what a colossal waste is responsible for the steel loss I saw in 1961. The mess is of course temporary. In a year or so it will be forgotten, but India too poor to afford the luxury of making such messes, especially when it can have been avoided with a little bit of common sense.

May the Indian Government follow its principles and let common sense prevail in the future development upon which it has already embarked. The first expansion provides for the doubling of capacity of the three existing government steel plants, the expansion of the two private steel plants and the setting up by the Government of India of another two steel plants, one with Russian help at Bokaro for four million tons and the other in the South with Anglo-American cooperation for an original plant of 1½ million tons to be expanded to four million tons in the next Five Year Plan.

IV

INDIAN MUSLIMS

**'Before we get the antidote from Irak, the snake bitten
person will die.'** (Muslim proverb)

DEATH AND THE PENDULUM

ON my return to India in 1964 I found a state of communal tension. There had been even communal riot in India and in Pakistan the worst since 1947 when the two countries nearly went to war over the fate of the two communities.

By an irony of fate the outbreak of communal rioting had been set loose by the occurrence of a riot itself in the shape of a pendulum. The riot, a very much less than believed to have commenced in the Prophet Mahomed, disappeared from the map of Sindh on the 6th December 1963.

In no time the Kashmiri violence, rioting, and burning cinemas in the capital of Kashmir, the police had to open fire and the Government fled.

The Kashmiri rioting was followed in two districts of East Pakistan in which there had been then by riots in West Bengal and in Calcutta City in which Muslims were killed. There were then riots in the capital of East Pakistan. Then a similar number of lives in India by the time I arrived communal peace had been restored but more 1,000 Muslims had been killed in India than what more people than had been killed in East Pakistan. There were over 4,000 Hindu refugees in India. The Indian Muslims were in every unhappy frame of mind. In India and in East Pakistan the Central Governments had done nothing to restore the confidence of their minorities in the State Governments. However had been as cooperative or as successful.

As I travelled through India I was able to pick up some of the threads of what had happened.

Most striking of all was the change of mood in Kashmir. The Indian riots had suddenly made many Kashmiri Muslims realize that there was no force in Pakistan's argument that Muslims should be part of a Muslim state.

The Kashmiris were united no longer. For the first time in Kashmiri memory, Ghulam Mahomed Sadiq, the new Prime

Minister, had allowed freedom of political speech and assembly. Everybody was holding public meetings, making speeches, and talking loudly while the talking was allowed. There was that jeweller by the Seventh Bridge who cheated me when I bought an emerald and who explained his worry. 'How can Kashmir ever stay with India? I saw what happened in Calcutta the other day. I have a shop there in Chowringhee. Now I know that I cannot trust my life to Hindu retaliation for what happens in Pakistan. We cannot be sure that we will always be safe with India. We must be independent or go with Pakistan.' His feelings were both widespread and typical.

Indeed the new Chief Minister was very much on the defensive when I saw him. Sadiq had come into office with Indian backing after the riots. He had his own, very logical reasons for wanting Kashmir to stay with India. A Socialist of the extreme Left he believed in democratic freedom and found little in Pakistan to tempt him, especially since Pakistan is an Islamic state and Sadiq is so confirmed an agnostic that he refused to take the oath of office on the Koran. Sadiq urged that Kashmir must stay with India from the point of view of economic and political advantages and also because Kashmiri Muslims are the hostages of Indian secularism. Just think of what might happen to the fifty million Indian Muslims if our two million Muslims make a bigoted choice? Sadiq had been profoundly shocked by the behaviour of the Kashmiri Muslims at the time of the disappearance of the Prophet's hair. 'Islam *ab olute* forbids the worshipping of idols and relics. Yet they went and faced bullets for a piece of hair! I tell you as a good Muslim I would be ashamed, and as an agnostic I am disgusted.'

From what I gathered the theft of the hair like so many world shaking incidents had been an accident. According to Kashmiri orthodox Muslim belief the relic has medicinal as well as spiritual powers. There had in the past been occasions when the relic had been smuggled to the bed of some sick VIP. One of Bakshi Ghulam Mahomed's old aunts was dying in Jammu; her dying wish, I was told by a CID official, was to see the relic a last time, her sister-in-law, Bakshi's mother, is believed to have died clasping the relic, and she wanted to do the same, by the time the theft had been discovered it was too late to replace it incognito. Sadiq told me that he thought Bakshi decided to exploit the

discovery of the theft in order to create trouble in Kashmir and prove to Nehru that he alone could restore law and order by being put back into power. Bakshi had not anticipated the sudden and spontaneous explosion of hatred against his family when the crowd went spontaneously to burn cinema houses belonging to his brothers.

Sadiq's position was a very unenviable one. His agnosticism in a place where riots had been caused by the disappearance of a relic was an obvious handicap. His conspicuous absence from mosques was much commented upon. His pro-Indian stand was an equally obvious handicap. His hope that good government would make him an Indian popular was in the mood of 1964, wishful to say the least. And he himself confessed that he could not address a public meeting and get a crowd. The mood in Kashmir was religious and militant. Sheikh Abdullah, who had come back to the Valley with his martyr's halo furnished by his talks with President Ayub was beginning to lose ground to a fanatical religious leader. Twenty-one year old Mir Wazir Maulana Farooque had plunged into politics from religion at the time of the disappearance of the Prophet's hair and was bringing to bear his towering height, his considerable charisma and the limitations of a mind still underdeveloped. Typical of the directness of his approach to politics was his question when he learnt that this was not my first visit to Kashmir. 'Why did you not come to see me the first time?' a question which gave me the rare satisfaction of answering that it had never been my habit to interview seventy year olds. To the instant great man justice, he took my retort with grace. The Mir Wazir—a very high religious hereditary title which explains Farooque's hold on the masses—was asking for the first time with Pakistan. So great was his following that for the first time since the murder of Ali, Shias and Sunnis had taken out a joint procession for Moharram to mourn the dastardly deed. 'That way we are demonstrating to the world that we Kashmiris stand united for Pakistan,' Farooque explained. The gesture was lost on Delhi which had not fully realized that Kashmiris take their religion seriously. A senior Indian official sent from Delhi at Sadiq's request to clean up the administration quoted this joint procession to me with genuine admiration. 'In India Shias and Sunnis would never do that; obviously Kashmiris are not fanatically bound to Islam.'

He did not realize that normally in Kashmir Shias and Sunnis behave as they do everywhere else.

Sheikh Abdullah's own position was becoming more delicate every day. Sobered by eleven years in jail, sobered above all by what he had seen of the recent communal riots, he was tightrope walking. Farooque openly wanted a merger with Pakistan. Abdullah had been convinced during his recent talks with Nehru and Ayub that there could be no solution to the Kashmir problem unless both India and Pakistan accepted it. Being a Kashmiri first and foremost he wanted a solution to be reached in such a way that it would benefit the people of Kashmir who were at present sacrificed, as he saw it, to the interests of India and Pakistan. However, on one point Sheikh Abdullah was determined: that solution should not jeopardize the safety of the Muslims in India.

'Come to dine to night and bring Maurice,' Sheikh Abdullah said as I was taking leave. We had known each other for fifteen years and he had always been very fond of Maurice. He used to tease me by saying that he felt sorry for his having 'unrepressible' wife, and he had once invited him as from one henpecked man to another.

Dinner was in the good Kashmiri style. We sat cross-legged on the floor while his beautiful Begum and her charming daughters served wonderful delicacies.

Beside us there were three newspaper correspondents from a Commonwealth newspaper and all the political leaders of the various groups in Kashmir's opposition including Farooque's key adviser. Farooque however was absent.

For hours (until 12 p.m.) — Sheikh Abdullah did the talking for the benefit of the foreign correspondent while we ate one Kashmiri treat after the other. He went back to the very beginnings of the dispute. By the time he had finished talking Maurice and I thought that he would, left to himself, prefer an Andorra type of solution: Independence for Kashmir with a joint defence guarantee by India and Pakistan and a customs union with both countries. But he would not let himself be pinned down. 'What matters now, is to keep India and Pakistan talking, and talking without passion. I must prepare the ground so that one day when the mood is friendly a solution can be worked out.'

'This may take a long time,' hazarded the foreign correspondent. Sheikh Abdullah drew himself up to the full height of his towering six feet three inches and said, 'I am 59; I can wait; time is on my side. I shall devote the rest of my life to promoting friendship between India and Pakistan.'

It was obvious, even to the foreign correspondent, that time in Kashmir was not on Abdullah's side. The Kashmiris were unanimous, whatever side they were on, that Abdullah had been a great Kashmiri, 'he gave us back our self-respect,' they all said, including Sidiq. But now that they had their self-respect they wanted a clear lead and the clear lead was coming from Farooque, not from the 'Tiger of Kashmir'. As we drove back to the hotel the foreign correspondent began to speculate on what Abdullah could do short of getting himself put back in jail, to retain his popularity in Kashmir since he was going to preach moderation and patience.

Abdullah is a clever politician. He found the solution during his Haj trip in 1965. His meeting with Chen-en-Lai so annoyed India that he has been exiled from Kashmir and put in restricted residence in a hill station in South India. His halo has thus been given a new lichen, there were riots in Kashmir, some people were shot at the news. Unfortunately a South Indian hill station is not a very suitable place from which to direct Indo-Pakistani talks. Abdullah's only consolation must be that his enforced absence from Kashmir makes it impossible for Farooque to steal his laurels. Indeed the divided opposition groups of Kashmir have coalesced into one.

Having heard so many Muslims complain of insecurity in Kashmir I was surprised to find that the Muslim morale in Calcutta was high. The credit for this goes very largely to the Chief Minister, P. C. Sen, an old acquaintance from the days when we lived in Calcutta. He was then Minister for Food and Agriculture and took great pride in the fact that, to use his own words, he was 'India's best spinner of yarn', he was faster at spinning, broke fewer threads and spun the finest thread of all Gandhi's disciples. My first interview in Calcutta was with him. He was quite frank and made no bones about what had happened in his State.

He explained that the January riots began while everybody in the Congress Party was at Bhubaneshwar for the Congress

session at which Nehru suffered his stroke, and he said that 465 people were killed, seventy of them Hindus shot by the Government. The riots spread to 215 villages around Calcutta. When P. C. Sen first got the news he wanted, knowing the weakness of his police force, to declare martial law. His Congress colleagues would not let him because of the adverse effect such a step would have on the mood in Pakistan. 'I had a long argument with Gulzarilal Nanda who refused. In fairness to Nanda the extent of the riots was not appreciated in Bhubaneswar. P. C. Sen rushed back to Calcutta and asked for military reinforcements. Two hundred troops were flown into West Bengal from North Bengal. As soon as they landed he told them to patrol. Their patrolling was not effective because they could not open fire. Under the law, unless martial law has been declared, troops can fire only with instructions from a Magistrate, except in self-defence. 'I rang Delhi to beg to be allowed to declare martial law,' said P. C. Sen. 'Gulzarilal Nanda told me to wait for one hour while he discussed the issue with T. T. Krishnamachari. After an hour he rang back and said "No".' P. C. Sen explained that he begged to be allowed to appoint the officers as temporary District Magistrates, and Nanda agreed at last. 'As soon as the officers took over District Magistrate duties, law and order were restored. But three precious days had been lost costing many lives.' P. C. Sen heaved a sigh of regret. Once the riots were over he received all the necessary help from Delhi to rehabilitate the victims and to make sure that nobody benefitted from the riots. 'You would be shocked, Mrs Zinkin, to know what caused the riots. It was not retaliation and all that. No! A lot of landlords saw an opportunity of getting rid of squatters and bustees* so that they could redevelop their property and make more money. Some of the landlords were Muslims, most of course were Hindus, but some of the people whose houses were destroyed were Hindus. It really was not a communal riot but a riot organized by the haves to get rid of the have-nots under the guise of communal trouble. I was really shocked by what happened. In a sense it was even worse than straight communal riots because it had material gain behind it.'

By the time I visited those Muslim quarters where the havoc had been worst, only new tiles on roofs and repairs in walls or an

* Slums.

odd bit of charred wood told their tale of past woe. The confidence of the inhabitants had been fully restored. This was not just imagination. Abdul, our old Calcutta driver who took me round from place to place, confirmed this and said with a broad grin: 'The government has been very fair; everybody has been compensated and their property has been given back to them. P. C. Sen is a good man.' Abdul who had lived through the terrible riots of 1946 and through the riots of 1950 was not worried this time. 'Plenty Hindu goondas have burnt Hindu bustees; and plenty big Muslim bustee landlords hired Hindu goondas to burn Muslims out of bustees.' Abdul was confirming what P. C. Sen had told me. I still fail to understand how the Calcutta riots had appeared retaliatory, especially when the Chief Minister had been so positive. 'Their own brothers! they hired goondas—Hindu goondas from the old refugee crowd, told them 'if you get the Muslims out you can get in'; but all they wanted was to get vacant possession in order to build luxury flats and offices. Murder for the sake of property! What have we come to! His face lit up for a second as he added: 'Do you know, Mrs Zinkin, in East Pakistan there have been many Muslims who risked their lives, some who actually lost their lives, to protect Hindus. This is why there has been no exodus from the districts of Comilla and from Chittagong City where there are many Hindus.'

'How many of the ten million Hindus living in East Pakistan are middle class? I was told in Karachi that 30 per cent of the licences go to Hindus and that they have many well paid jobs.'

'At least one million,' said P. C. Sen without any hesitation, 'lawyers, doctors, shopkeepers, teachers, but of course also a large number of old people who own property and do not want to leave; especially old women who want to die where they have spent their lives. Amongst us in Bengal there is a belief that the widow must die near her married home so that she may not leave the place where she lived with her husband. The young, the families—especially when there are young girls—they come to Calcutta and stay here to be educated and married off. But there are many family men whose families live in India and who work in Pakistan. The trouble in Pakistan is not the Muslims of East Pakistan, it is the West Pakistanis. In East Bengal Hindus and Muslims are brothers, they are all Bengalis together.' I had no doubt he was right.

I still remember how, during the Tagore Centenary, I was reproved by a Pakistani Cultural Attaché stuttering with indignation at an official supper because I ventured to say that not all of Tagore's work was first class. He came from East Pakistan; any aspersion on 'The Poet' was far more insulting for him than the comments I made against Basic Democracies, or Pakistan's case over Kashmir. P. C. Sen had ended the interview saying, 'I can assure you, Mrs Zinkin, that many East Pakistani Muslims would migrate to India if they could; indeed, look at the influx into Assam!'

In Jamshedpur the riots had obviously been far more widespread and the casualties far heavier than anybody outside Jamshedpur realized. One member of the Jamshedpur Citizen's Peace Committee who had been active throughout told me that at least 1,500 Muslims had been slaughtered in Jamshedpur and round about.

The worst rioting had taken place at TELCO—the locomotive and truck factory operated by Tatas in cooperation with Mercedes-Benz.

By the time I got to Jamshedpur the 41,000 Muslim refugees had left the fifteen camps in which they had been put for protection; they were back in their houses which had been repaired. Survivors had been compensated, TELCO alone was paying out 420,000 rupees in addition to contributions to repairs and welfare; other firms were paying much less since their labour force had lost many fewer people. Except at TELCO communal harmony seemed to prevail once more. However, despite TISCO's protests, the Government of India was deporting all the Pakistanis employed by them. At least 500 of their skilled workers were Muslims from what had become Pakistan at the time of Partition. Their families had stayed behind on the land so they had opted for Pakistani nationality while continuing to work in Jamshedpur. TISCO was still negotiating with the Government of India to be allowed to transfer provident funds and their pensions to those of their old employees who had become unwitting victims of embittered international relations, overnight.

Delhi had ordered a thorough investigation into the causes of the communal disturbances but for the reasons described below by the correspondent of the *Calcutta Statesman* the Government of Bihar was not co-operating.

On April 8 Mr Tata* said that personally he could not believe that an explosion of such violence—the hooliganism, the fanaticism and the looting—could have been a spontaneous flare-up of communal passion aroused by sympathy for the refugees who passed through Jamshedpur by train.

... There was enough evidence (Mr Tata pointed out) 'in the very fact that identical events flared up simultaneously, at the same hour on the same day, in different areas of Jamshedpur, even outside the township, and in places like Rourkela, to show that there was, apart from anything else, an organized plot to loot and commit arson and murder.' He said he could only hope that an independent public inquiry would be conducted into these events, as demanded by Mr Jaiprakash Narayan. Local leaders of all political parties subsequently supported this demand.

The Bihar Government's attitude towards the demand for a public inquiry seems negative... the State Chief Minister said he knew what had caused the riots and, therefore, there was no need for an inquiry—least of all, a public inquiry. The cause, he said, was the refugees passing through Jamshedpur and other stations in Bihar...

The Chief Minister... made a very significant remark. Referring to the performance of the police at Jamshedpur and other places, he said that after all, policemen were also human beings, and that it was natural if they also were carried away by emotions... On several occasions in the past, the police in the States have been suspected of partisanship. In the recent disturbances the hesitant and ineffective action of some officers and men, at least in the initial stages, suggests that they were partisan or deliberately indifferent.†

At Rourkela things had been incomparably worse than at Jamshedpur. The current guess was that about 5,000 Muslims had been killed.

The evening of my arrival at Rourkela I met a young Indian whose brother was an old friend of mine. Employed by a British firm, this young man was on his inspection tour of Orissa; his immediate concern was to see if his channels of distribution had recovered from the rioting. 'It was terrible. Do you know that I arrived in Rourkela that evening things were at their height. It was absolutely terrifying. The mobs from that shanty town round the station were roaming the steel town shouting slogans,

* J. R. D. Tata, Chairman of the Tata Board of Directors.

† *The Statesman*, 8.5.64, article by our special representative in Eastern India, headed 'Centre probing into factors behind Eastern India riots'.

armed with crow bars and steel rods which had been sharpened at one end into becoming spears. And there was not a single policeman to be seen anywhere. The Government had been taken so much by surprise that it sat paralyzed for a whole week. But the worst of it is that the killing which spread from the plant itself went all along the aboriginal tract almost as far as Sambalpur. I am going to Sambalpur tomorrow morning; why don't you come along?" I was very tempted, specially since my young friend spoke Orisa and could act as interpreter in the villages; but in order to keep to my schedule I would have had to miss Rourkela; so after much hesitation I refused his sporting offer. Before he left he told me of the missionaries in Rourkela. "They can tell you much more about the riots; they sheltered many Muslims. The Chief Minister of Orissa singled them out as the cause of the riots! He said they instigated the tribal people to kill the Muslims to revenge the Christians from East Pakistan. The tribals of Orissa he said in a public speech are Christians too. For that matter Patnaik has also been saying the same thing, that it is all the fault of the Missionaries. This is of course a bloody lie! I was here so I know - you can confirm my story with the Collector, a good bloke, the other was transferred, he was no good. This is how it all started in Rourkela. There is a Muslim baker in that cesspool near the station. When the refugees passed through he sent them bread. Three weeks later the news spread that this bread had been poisoned, that he had poisoned the refugees. In no time the news spread to the factory that Muslims had poisoned refugees. The guards of the steel plant ran for dear life to their homes while some of the Bengalis in the plant began to incite their fellow workers to make arms out of bits of rods. The official story is that tribals invaded the plant and manufactured arms out of the steel that was laying about with the existing machine tools. Tribals my foot. I cannot turn a lathe and I am not a tribal. It takes skilled practice to operate a machine tool. The arms were then distributed to all and sundry and the people were told "go and kill Muslims". And by God they did!"

My young friend had not exaggerated. I met an American working at Rourkela who informed me that he had been threatened by a very senior Bengali colleague in the steel plant to keep his nose out of the Inquiry if he knew what was good for him. This

American had been so scared that he had not given evidence to the Commission of Inquiry; just as he had been too scared at the time, on that fateful night when his servants were butchered in their compound at the back of his house, to go and help despite their pitiful screams for help. 'I had never heard such screams of horror; it still haunts me. I was too scared to do anything except drink more whisky. After all there were hoards of armed men gone wild and I did not have a gun or anything. What could I do? I do not blame the German technicians who have broken their contracts and gone home. These Indian people are savages! I can never feel comfortable amongst them now.' The Collector confirmed the stories I had collected in Roukela. He had been sent to clean up the mess, he was not very experienced and he could find no precedent upon which to draw for guidance since Orissa has had a very peaceful record.

The missionaries whom the Chief Minister was using as scape-goats were dedicated men from the four corners of Europe who had taken their vows and lived a simple life running a school and visiting the tribal poor. The brother with whom I spoke (the others were busy teaching or were out in the villages) pointed out that only 25 per cent of the tribals in Orissa are Christian, indeed that few if any of the Christian tribals had participated in the killings because they had been told by the missionaries not to listen to the agitators who had been roaming the countryside in cars, trucks and jeeps making speeches in the tribal languages. 'Some of our fathers heard them,' said the tall Scotsman with his broad accent, his reddish beard aching in the heat, 'we at once reported to the Government warning them that there might be danger. We also told the tribals that this was not true. But then only our own Christians listen to us when it comes to that, and then some of them may have lost their heads in the madness which followed. Mass murder is very catching.'

'But what did they say those people who came in trucks and jeeps?'

'And loudspeakers, but you must understand not electric loudspeakers, just the old fashioned horn-blowing ones. What they said was something like this—it is all in Father Superior's report and he has passed it on to the CID. If you like I can write to him; he has gone to Cuttack to give evidence—it is for him to decide whether to release it or not.'

'What was it they said. Forget about the report; you must remember.'

The young monk pondered; his beard was bleeding in the setting sun. I was beginning to fret, I still had to visit the hospital and the works and I had a train to catch; however there is no hurrying a Scots monk. 'Well, I suppose there is no harm in my telling you; after all the Chief Minister is trying to make us the villains of the piece. But mind you, I teach here in the school. I have not myself heard anything direct. I have only heard what the brothers who go to the villages have told us and what we were told by Father Superior. This is roughly what they said: "India and Pakistan are at war. Soon Muslims will come rushing to you screaming. When this happens you must save the motherland. Kill them. You have bows and arrows, do not wait until the Muslims come near you so that they can kill you first. When you see them coming, shoot your arrows. Jai Hind." And so, when the Muslims began to run to the villages because they were attacked in Rotukela the Adivasis shot them.'

I heard stories of what happened in East Pakistan when I went to visit the refugee transit camp at Manna in Madhya Pradesh. The camp looked like one of those army camps with metal roofed huts - it must have been terribly hot to stay there and the people were looking thoroughly miserable. Some of them were in transit waiting to be given land in the South of India or in the reclaimed Daadakaranya area, others, the 'P.L.s', would stay for a much longer time at Manna, until some institution could take them. 'P.L.' stands, in the functional crudity of official jargon, for 'permanent liability'. P.L.'s were widows, P.L.'s were people like the half-demented curly-haired woman who clung to me, victim of a terrible injury. While she clung to me her sun slipped off exposing the place where her second arm had been hacked off neatly from the shoulder, leaving bare a piece of white bone and a scar shining indecently bright against the brown of her skin. P.L.'s were small orphaned children who would take time to grow into self-supporting individuals. P.L.'s were those too old to start anew and without a family to look after them. There were many P.L.'s at Manna.

The clerical work was carried out by educated refugees who acted as interpreters for the others. In every case it was the same old story. People had come from outside, they had attacked the

temple, the hut, the shop, the house; they had set fire to whatever would burn and attacked the people with kachis, the long knives used for agricultural purposes. The police had been conspicuously absent or had interfered too late. The aggressors had been shouting in a language the refugees did not understand. Obviously these were not Bengalis. They must have been Biharis or old refugees from various parts of India.

Typical of attitudes in East Pakistan was the story of my guide in the camp. He had been working as a clerk in Narayanganj, the mill belonged to a West Pakistani and the heads of sections were West Pakistanis. The clerk's family lived in Dacca where he used to come at week-ends. When he heard on the radio that there had been riots in Dacca he began to worry for his wife and children. Fortunately for him a Muslim colleague arrived by truck from Dacca and told him that he had taken them into his house. 'Do not worry, my wife is looking after them, but all I could do is lock the door after they had left your house, you had better go and see what can be done to protect your property. Why not take the side back on the truck. I am sure the office will not mind. If I were you I would try and get my wife and children to India for a while, then your mind will be at ease. We do not mind keeping them with us, you understand, but nobody knows how far this madness can go and there may be risks.' The clerk thanked his friend, jumped on the truck and drove straight to the firm's head-office to offer to offset the time it would take him to sort them out. He must have left due to him. He had not even stopped on the way to see his wife, so great was his sense of duty to his employers. The officer in charge of the Narayanganj mill was straightforward. 'You had no business to go off without permission, either you go straight back to Narayanganj or you are sacked!' My guide sighed. 'Mine was a quite typical case, there have been dozens like it. In every instance the Muslim neighbours have behaved like brothers, it is those damned West Pakistanis. Nobody realizes that our Muslim brothers have them just as much as we do, and with good cause. They despise them because they do not speak Arabic and because they do not keep their women in purdah.'

Listening to the clerk reminded me of my Muslim friend in Lahore with whom I had had a very sad and long chat the day before Nehru died. I had known Azim for as long as I had

known India; he was travelling on the boat which was taking me to what was then India, for the first time. Azim belongs to a distinguished family from Kanpur; his family was split at the time of Partition; some members opted for Pakistan, others for India, some happened to be living and working in Pakistan at the time, others happened to own land in India and stayed there. Azim's family is thus fairly evenly divided between India and Pakistan. Its Pakistani members occasionally visit India. India is much easier to go to for a Pakistani than Pakistan for an Indian Muslim because of the possible complications which might arise over property under the provision by which the assets of an 'intending evacuee' can be confiscated. Usually Azim's family, which is well connected and affluent, meets abroad.

Azim was outspokenly bitter. 'The natives, the pukka Pakistanis, the "sons of the soil" - S.O.S.'s for short as they call themselves - hate us. Do you know that in West Pakistan, that Eldorado built as a homeland for the Muslims of India by that Indian Muslim Jinnah, there is no room for those who are not "sons of the soil". At all times, in and out of season, we are being reminded that we are *not* sons of the soil, that we are an unwanted burden, an encumbrance; they talk of us as "Non-sons-of-the-soil" those S.O.B.'s! Yes! That's what it has come to. Damn it, if Jinnah, poor fool, were still alive there would be no room for him in Pakistan! Qad-I-Azam, my foot! And do you know, Taya, the really terrible result of this division between the "sons of the soil" and the "non-sons of the soil" is that we who should be most active and interested in fostering goodwill between India and Pakistan, we are the worst offenders. You see, we have to ingratiate ourselves, we have to make them forget that we were ever part of India, of a higher, more cultured, better world. We have to justify our having come, our being here, by making it look as if life in India is intolerable for Muslims. We must be more anti-Indian than the sons of the soil, otherwise they look upon us as fifth columnists. This is the more necessary that here, in Lahore, one suffocates; there is no cultural life compared with say Aligarh, or indeed Delhi. And so when we go to India for a breather we dare not say so; we must pretend that heaven is here. Do you understand what I mean. I of course do not do this; but I have heard so many of

those in the same position as myself do it that I have given up ticking them off; what is the use; the whole of West Pakistan is against them. And nobody here in Pakistan seems to realize that these stories of Muslim persecutions are not true. India has a Muslim Vice-President, if something were to happen to Dr Radhakrishnan India would have a Muslim President, and in a Federal set-up like India's the President is not merely a figure-head, especially once Nehru goes. But no, because of their need for ingratiating themselves the Muslims who come from India do their worst. And here people are only too ready to believe; they forget that India has Muslim Ambassadors, Generals, Cabinet Ministers, and that we have practically no Hindus to show for all our claim that we do not discriminate.' Azim sipped his third whisky, lit a cigarette, paced the lawn and suddenly sat down. 'Mind you, I say India is not an Eldorado either. There have been those riots there a dozen times, there is the growing feeling of the young that to be Hindu is to be Hindu, but then who do we have to blame for that? That fool, Ayub. What does he do? He chooses *the moment* when the Chinese try to invade India to befriend China and to try to stop India being helped by the West. Had he said 'Let's cut the past, we are brothers after all, take your troops away from Kashmir, use them in Assam, I promise not to take advantage of this', relations between India and Pakistan would have improved far more than if Kashmir had become ours. If do Pakistan's troops are vital to the well-being of the minorities in this state, but that fool Ayub thought he would scare any one. 'Soldier should never be allowed to be politicians.' Azim drank more whisky, pondered and added, 'Not lawyers'.

MUSLIM MOOD

THE Muslim mood in India in the summer of 1964 was not sunny. Typical of what many felt is an article by Zafar Futeally, a Muslim intellectual. The article was published in *Opinion*, a Bombay weekly which has a small but very influential readership. The article is called 'The Muslim role in India', some of the salient points are worth quoting.

. . . The basic conflict within the Muslim community about whether to go it alone or participate with other communities in the national endeavour is largely unsolved

The recent events in Jamshedpur and Rourkela show the extent of communal bitterness that exists between Hindus and Muslims, and placed as they are, it will be for the Muslims to take the difficult initiative of projecting the secular ideal before the country. For the Hindus the question is optional, and not one of great importance. For the Muslims it is one of being able to play an equal part in the affairs of the country with their Hindu brethren.

In spite of the undoubtedly psychological handicap in which Indian Muslims have been placed because of the fact of Pakistan, their permanent safeguard in the Constitution of India. As it stands today, it is eminently satisfactory. This Constitution may be amended from time to time but it is inconceivable that any amendment will be directed specifically to the detriment of Muslim

ally goes on to suggest that the amendments are likely to favour more socialism.

Like the Muslims we economically back and they are more likely to turn themselves into a backward class. Therefore, if a Hindu could not marry a Muslim by the law of the land. It was forbidden both by Hinduism and by Islam. Since January 1, 1955, he can. The importance of this change should not be underestimated. It is a vital long-term measure toward national integration even though feelings between the communities are not too fraternal at present. What is of the utmost importance is that people should express their opinion about the status of Muslims in this country frankly, manfully and openly. The argument may be embarrassing at times but that is far better than the feelings to go 'underground'. Mr J. R. D. Tata's suggestion that there should be a public enquiry into the communal riots at Jamshedpur might, if accepted, have brought to light many deplorable facts and attitudes. But in spite of that it would have created on the whole a greater feeling of confidence among the Muslims than a blanket silence. Frank interchange of views lead to constructive solutions, feelings which remain underground erupt dangerously and irrationally from time to time.

It is never easy to be a minority. When things are not going well for the majority being a minority becomes difficult. When the misfortunes of the majority are to some extent made worse by outsiders who can, in some way, be connected with the minority, the future of that minority can look bleak to say the

least. It is indeed a measure of India's genuine tolerance that bleak though the mood was in 1964 it was bleak, not black.

Nobody was going to *do* anything to the Muslims, but the onus of proof that they did not wish India ill and Pakistan well had been subconsciously thrown upon them. People had not ceased having Muslim friends, but they had become conscious of the fact that these friends were Muslims, a consciousness which had often been lacking before. Protestations like 'some of my best friends are Muslims' ring a familiar but new bell. However, suspicion was confined to the upper classes. Our ex-driver Mahomed Israil did not feel in any way bothered. He did not feel that Nehru's death had deprived his community of its champion and made it more vulnerable. 'My village in Uttar Pradesh has a Muslim majority and we have always lived in the best of terms with our Hindu neighbours. We have never had communal riots, memsahab, not even in 1947. That is because we show each other consideration. For example we never kill cows, at the most bull-dogs, usually goats, and the Hindus so arrange their processions that they never pass before our mosque.' Mahomed Israil's white teeth flashed under his Douglas Fairbanks moustache, his grey eyes smiled with pride. 'We have a Muslim headman, he is very important. He gets votes, so the M.L.A. who is a Hindu always consults him. No, memsahab, I do not miss Nehru. Nehru was a good man no doubt but we Muslims will be better off without him. What Muslims need is somebody who can settle with Pakistan. Why should I go to Karachi? I have a good job here in Bombay and my family is in Uttar Pradesh. Why should I go because of Kashmir? What nonsense! And what if Kashmir goes to Pakistan? Nobody in our village will be killed. We made a blood pact in 1947, the Muslims and the Hindus of my village. Not one hair of anybody's head was touched, or will be touched. When outsiders come and try to talk trouble we shame them. If they continue we tell them to go away. I am an Indian. What do I care for Pakistan?'

If Mahomed Israil felt wanted, this was not the case of my friend Shureen. 'For the last twelve years I have not been confirmed in my post by the Government, I am still a "temporary" after twelve years. There is nobody better qualified than myself; so I do get promotion and all that, but on a temporary basis; this affects my pension and provident fund. Is it fair to be

temporary after twelve years? This I am sure is because I am a Muslim. Is it my fault if I am a Muslim? I do not believe in the Koran; half my family have married Hindus. Taya, I was offered a very high and well paid job in Pakistan because there are no women in Pakistan with my particular qualifications. I refused, I would rather emigrate to England than to Pakistan if I have to leave India. Pakistan stands for all the bigotry I hate. I cannot complain too much about the way they treat me here; I have been sent abroad for a year on a Government of India recommendation for further training, but why don't they confirm me? I have spoken so many times about it to the Minister, I have written reminders, and nothing happens.' Shireen had genuine cause for frustration—so genuine that I went to see her Minister to tell him. She is still not confirmed in her post, this is not because she is a Muslim, of that, knowing her Minister, I feel sure; it is because of red tape, inefficiency and bureaucratic procrastination. During my trip I ran into a number of perfectly good Hindus who had very similar complaints. There was one retired railway official who had been waiting for the past eight years for his pension papers to be sanctioned so that the Accountant General's Office could issue instructions to the bank to send him his monthly cheque. Shireen however was bound to credit her religion rather than maladministration for the way she was treated.

'They are laying off Muslims,' said a Labour Welfare Officer in Bombay. 'This is quite deliberate policy and though I am a Muslim myself I do not blame them. Millowners have to think of their factories first and if there are only riots as in Jamshedpur, etc. and they have large numbers of Muslims, who knows if the mills will not have to be shut down either because there are riots, or because half of the labour force is afraid of going to work in case there are going to be riots. Of course I do protest against this policy but I can see the employer's point of view. The sad truth is that these days employing a Muslim is a security risk.'

'But how can they lay off Muslims? I thought that under Indian law employers cannot dismiss people at will.'

'The practice in the textile industry is not to have many permanent workers but to hire at the gate from day to day. Usually, of course it is the same people, more or less, who get the job, but now the policy is not to hire Muslims at the gate.' He

added that he had heard that the Government of Gujerat had, on instructions from Delhi, evacuated some Muslims from the area near the Pakistani border. He shrugged his shoulders, chewed his pan, spat a sliver of reddish foam and sighed. 'That too makes good sense. After all we have Pakistan to thank for all this. The way they behaved when the Chinese attacked! And between you and me who knows what some of the Muslims along the border might not do if there was trouble between India and Pakistan the call of Islam could be stronger than *Jana Gana Mana* *'

'Absurd, Iaya absurd! There you go again looking for trouble! You are quite incredible. You suffer from too much imagination, that is what! What in idea! Of course there has been no change in the attitude to Muslims since you left India. Look at me, I am a Muslim and I feel just as safe and wanted by everybody as ever. Nehru did not defend us. On the contrary. He humiliated us terribly by the way he carried on over Kashmir and by the way I went out of my way to make it a point to be openly pro Muslim all the time. Why I should not say this, but there were not a lot of us, in high Government positions who would never forget that high and dry they been Hindus. I assure you that if there had been a change I would know. Damn it! I would be one of the first to feel it. So get these silly ideas out of your head.' Nusrat, an old friend from Calcutta days, was shaking the whole of her body in denial as I repeated to her what I had heard other Muslims say. She now lived in Delhi because her husband had become a contact man for a British firm. 'But Nusrat dear it stands to reason, and it is not only the Muslim.

Nusrat and I had known each other for long enough to set aside pretences or fear of treading upon each other's egos. Nusrat was not pretending because of her marriage to a Hindu, marriage which had been so secret and short at the time that she had been excommunicated by her own Muslim community. However, Gandhi had given her his blessing, and she had become an honorary Hindu agnostic. I insisted, 'But Nusrat, there was that chap the other day on the train to Poona. He was a Bohra Muslim from Bombay. He kept cursing India saying "If Hindus are maltreated in Pakistan that is nobody's business here in

* The Indian National Anthem

India. We are Indians, not Hindus; the welfare of Pakistan's Hindus and Christians is the affair of Pakistan. India should seal her borders and not allow anybody in. And if there are riots against Muslims in India, then by all means shoot everybody at sight; that would stop them." Nusrat was not convinced, I told her of the senior Muslim Government servant in Delhi who had begun to stammer with emotion when I branched upon the delicate subject of communal integration and who told me with a violence and passion quite incompatible with his official position. 'There is no such thing as Muslims in India! There are Indians who are Muslims and Muslims who were Muslim Leaguers before Independence. Those who were Muslim Leaguers and created Pakistan should be evicted to their Pakistan if Pakistan misbehaves - it is *they* who are the *host* *gens* of Pakistan's good behaviour - not us the Nationalist and Congress Muslims who never wanted Pakistan. Nobody suspects an Indian Christian of being anti-Indian but because of those Muslim Leaguers everybody expects all Muslims to be potential fifth columnists, it is most unfair. It's damned humiliating to have senior citizens issuing statements to say they are loyal Indian subjects, and happy to live in India.'

Nusrat was beginning to look less sure - she had been lighting one cigarette after the other and forgetting to puff. 'If what you say is true then I must have been living in a cocoon. It is true that my friends are not the sort who would be intolerant or jingoistic. But then I do think that Hindus in general are tolerant so long as you do not upset the taboos of their castes. It was not Nehru's sermonizing that made India secular - it is Hindu tolerance. Of course there were there not in Central India that was terrible and people were so ashamed that it was played down by everybody except J. P. and J. R. D. * But then J. P. is a real saint, the voice of India's conscience and J. R. D. is a good man. It is true there has been no public enquiry despite what everybody said should be done at the time. All right, I say, you win.' Nusrat fanned herself with the corner of her sari. 'Do you know what I will do? I will ask a few Muslims to come and meet you here, quietly, and we shall have a sort of round table discussion over lunch, how is that? and then we shall see who is right? You or I. I will choose them so that I can be sure they will be

* Jayaprakash Narayan and J. R. D. Tata

frank so long as they will be assured that they will not be reported in a way which will get them in trouble; that is, if there is something critical they want to say.' Nusrat walked to her desk, pulled out pencil and pad and began to scribble. 'Now let us see whom to ask? Let us keep it small. And also a cross section.' She was so taken up by the idea that she absent-mindedly tried to light the tip of her pencil. 'Yes, that is it—a politician, preferably an M.P.; also a Municipal Councillor, a professional man; I know a young doctor who will be just the thing. An educationalist, and a Trade Union leader. That makes six. I think we could have one more, I have a friend who is a publisher. That makes nine with the two of us. Enough.' Nusrat was already busy on the phone; twenty minutes later it had all been fixed for lunch next day. 'I told them you were flying back to England,' she laughed nervously and added, 'Taya I know that I shall be proved right but I promise you that I will not take part in the discussion. I will not say a single word, and so that they don't feel shy I will tell Ananda to go to the club for lunch.'

Lunch was illuminating. My only regret is that there was no tape recorder; but had there been one, had I taken notes, the discussion might not have been so frank. Nusrat was so stunned by what she heard that she had not the slightest difficulty in keeping her word not to interfere. She was even more stunned, as she told me later, because what she heard was said with dignity and complete detachment. The only bitterness expressed that day over lunch was against Nehru. Indeed the tone of the discussion was so remarkably academic that it sounded almost as if her guests were discussing the position of Muslims in say, Canada, rather than their own. The publisher was non-political and had never taken an interest in anything except publishing. The educationalist had always been pro-British; he had been at Oxford and had wished the British Raj to continue for at least one more generation. The M.P. was and had always been Congress. The Municipal Councillor was a member of the Socialist Party. The trade unionist was an old Gandhian. The doctor was young and modern; he had specialized in X-rays in America and was not interested in politics.

That spring all seven of them had suddenly become aware of the fact that they belonged to a minority; that no matter how they themselves behaved they would be at the mercy of the

goodwill of the majority and that this goodwill was itself at the mercy of repeated attacks upon it by Pakistan. 'Not one day passes without the press in Pakistan saying something against India, or worse still, the Government of Pakistan doing something which must either annoy or harm India. And it is not just Kashmir; though of course Kashmir makes matters worse, no doubt,' said the Municipal Councillor. 'The educationalist nodded sadly. 'Yes. It has come to this. I now advise my bright young students, I must, in all honesty, after all I must think of their future, to go and get jobs in Pakistan. Our universities in India are much better, they have therefore the edge over Pakistanis when it comes to jobs. I have to think ahead for them, they ask me and they trust me. Say Pakistan and China get together and do a pincer movement on Assam and Kashmir? just for the sake of argument. We would all be killed, or at least many would be killed before the Government could save us.' The publisher scratched the palms of his hands and said slowly, as his thoughts were crystallizing for the first time into the unforgettable concreteness of words: 'Yes. That thing is like poison; no, not poison, rather like slander. It spreads and then everyone becomes intoxicated with it, even when there is no cause. It is easy to prove something positive. But it is impossible to prove something negative. Just as Hindus, I mean Indians, must wonder whether I am loyal, I now catch myself wondering whether India is playing fair. For example I was studying the Government examination list the other day, for the first time, to see if enough Muslims were getting jobs. I had never done that before.' The educationalist sighed. 'Yes, I know, and you found very few. How is one to know why? Is it because many who would get in go to Pakistan instead and rightly, in a way. Or is it that few are good enough? Remember we are "backward". There is no denying it. After all the Untouchables have their quota of government jobs and they can never fill it.'

None of them was blaming India. That in itself was remarkable. On the contrary they were bending backwards to excuse and understand India. 'After all there was the strain of secularism of the national defeat by China; when one feels defeated one always becomes chauvinistic. If only Ayub had come forward to help India!' said the M.P. with a note of angry despair, 'but no! The bastard had to play his clever little game and to hell with

fifty million Muslims! "India is secular," he said, "let India look after her fifty million Muslims, it's nothing to do with us; let India prove to the world that she really is secular." That is too easy. I ask you how the Americans would react if America was attacked by Mexico and there were twenty-five million Mexicans in America? And many of them who had been openly pro-Mexico?" he added after some reflection, 'what has happened is really this: it is no longer enough to be an Indian to be a patriot, one has to be a Hindu. Parsis will do and Christians just, because of Goa. Who but Nehru and Pakistan are to blame? The trade unionist was absentmindedly picking his teeth with his fork; he stopped and said: 'I protest when they retrench Muslims, but to be frank I understand their reasons. I myself might hesitate, to employ Muslims in key industries like steel, even Indian Muslims of known Congress views. Not because of sabotage or fifth columnism but because there might be a repeat of Rourkela and the key industry might suffer.'

The young doctor who had said very little came to life suddenly with the following thoughts. 'Then there is the question of marriage. Eligible girls, the dowried industrialists' daughters are in Pakistan. So naturally young men with a future go to Pakistan—after all most people still make arranged marriages. This also works the other way. As you know, Nusrat can tell you, I am related to a senior Indian diplomat. Well, he told my elder brother to get his daughter, my niece, married off in Lahore. Not that she could not do well in India but she is bound, in the long run, to do better in Pakistan. She and her children will, no matter what happens, be free from the risks that might possibly befall them in India. And even if there were to be no risks in India it is no fun to spend one's life wondering whether one is going to be penalized for something over which one has no control. One gets tired of having to be always more royalist than the king. It means that one cannot even make normal criticisms without wondering whether one is going to be misunderstood. And that is true not just for Muslims, but for their friends too. Look at what happened to the son of Khushwant Singh, the Sikh novelist!'

They told me the story—which I had already heard in London—of how Khushwant's son had not been taken into the Foreign Service because he had gone to attend the wedding of a

family friend in Lahore before his final interview. 'The boy had passed the written examination with high marks. They failed him at the interview, although he wears a beard and a turban and is a good orthodox Sikh, simply because he had gone to the wedding of Manzur Qadir's daughter. They had been children together, and at Cambridge together. Such friendship was too much for the examiners.' I had known Khushwant's son since he had been a small boy with plaits and I could think of many reasons why he might have failed the interview. Charming though he is, I do not myself think he would make a good foreign office type. He is much better suited to journalism which is what he is training for. But practically everybody I met in India (Muslim and Hindu) that summer told me how his trip to Lahore had disqualified him for the Foreign Service. In such an atmosphere who can blame an educationalist for advising his young Muslim students to go to Pakistan or Shireen for wanting to emigrate to Britain?

Yet it would be misleading and unfair to say that India is no longer secular. What has happened is that in some subconscious way Indians have become nationalists, militantly Indian and that, for some of them, the difference between Indian and Hindu is blurred as it was for those two young men at the Srinagar airport who mistook me for a tourist and kept telling me about 'Bharat' instead of India and described themselves as 'Bharatis' when I asked them where they came from (the Punjab or the UP was what I had in mind). When I protested that there is no such thing as a 'Bharati' they insisted that there had till 1947 been India and that now there was Bharat while the rest had become Pakistan. Theirs was an extreme attitude; far more widespread however was the reaction of the Hindu businessman who retorted, when I told him that I thought the Muslims were beginning to feel themselves a vulnerable minority, 'So what! that is just precisely what they are, a minority. If they don't like it and want to be a majority let them go to Pakistan, nobody stops them. They can even take their movable property with them. If they want to stay in India they are welcome, but only so long as they don't indulge in hanky pankey and do not gloat about how much better things are in Pakistan. They must accept the fact that they are a minority; indeed, if I were the Government I would not allow them to be near the borders of India, in

their own interest; then nobody could accuse them of sabotage. Basically we must recognize that, as with the Communists, many Muslims have their hearts outside India and we do not welcome half-hearted citizens.'

However, in spite of everything, secularism in India still runs deep. When India and Pakistan nearly went to war over the Rann of Kutch in the spring of 1965 and again when hostilities broke out in Kashmir at the end of the same summer there were no communal riots on either side of the border.

I had feared the worst for I could still remember lunch at my friends the Smiths in Bombay when Mrs Smith said with a chuckle: 'Children! You know what they are like! We had a letter from John at last. He has arrived in London safely and is on his way to school. Guess what he wrote. "When the plane stopped off in Karachi I spat on Pakistan; that will teach them a lesson for gloating over China." ' Their daughter chipped in, 'Yes Mummy, I too hate Pakistan and please never ask me to invite Akhtar again; we are not on speaking terms any more.'

'What has Akhtar done? She used to be your best friend?' Mrs Smith asked.

Jane shook her blonde pony tail indignantly. 'Only the other day we were discussing the Chinese invasion, and do you know what Akhtar said? She said, "If the Chinese had attacked Pakistan they would have had a tough fight; it is only Indians who run instead of fighting." Fancy the nerve, her saying that! So I gave it her good and hard. I said, "If that is how you feel, go to Pakistan and stay there. And never speak to me again!"'

When British children living in India can feel so strongly it is indeed a miracle that, at a time of extreme tension, there should have been no communal riots. Perhaps people still remember Nehru's last, pathetic and rambling broadcast to the nation.

We have many difficult problems to face. There is the menace of China and Pakistan. There is a tremendous influx of refugees from East Pakistan and our duty is to look after them and rehabilitate them.

But I am speaking to you today about something which is more important than anything else. This is the communal disharmony which has resulted in many deaths in East Pakistan and in India and has created bitterness and fear amongst various communities. This feeling is fatal for all of us and unless stopped completely will lead to most dangerous consequences.

This communal trouble is entirely opposed to our policy and to our future and I do appeal to you to fight it and to put an end to it.

India is a country of many communities and unless we can live in harmony with each other, respecting each others' beliefs and habits we cannot build up a great and united nation

Ever since the distant past it has been India's proud privilege to live in harmony with others. That has been the basis of India's culture. Long ago Buddha taught us this lesson

In our own day Mahatma Gandhi laid great stress on it and indeed lost his life because he laid great stress on communal goodwill and harmony. We have, therefore, a precious heritage to keep up and we cannot allow ourselves to act contrary to it.

Pakistan came into existence on the basis of hatred and intolerance. We must not allow ourselves to react to this in the same way. That surely will be defeat for us. We have to live up to our immemorial culture and try to win over those who are opposed to us. To compete with each other in hatred and barbarity is to sink below the human level and tarnish the name of our country and our people. One evil deed leads to another. Thus evil grows. That is not the way to stop these inhuman deeds. If we can behave with tolerance and friendship to each other this surely will have its effect elsewhere. This vicious circle will go on bringing sorrow and disaster to all of us and others.

It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that we should realize our duty to all our countrymen whoever they might be. We must always remember that every Indian, to whatever religion he might belong, is our brother and must be treated as such.

A few days ago I wrote to President Ayub Khan of Pakistan appealing to him against these inhumanities that were taking place and suggesting that our Home Ministers might meet to curb these inhumanities. Today I received a reply from President Ayub Khan in which he has entirely agreed with my proposal. I hope that soon a meeting of Home Ministers will take place, probably in Delhi to consider this vital problem and what steps to take to meet it. I hope that will have a salutary effect on our people.

But it is not so much the Home Ministers and others in authority who can put an end to this unhappy business. It is the people themselves who have to act rightly and speedily and thus promote an atmosphere of friendship and harmony between different religious groups and not allow their anger and bitterness to grow.

I appeal therefore to all my countrymen to put an end to this inhuman behaviour. I would specially appeal to our friends and countrymen, the Adivasis in Bihar and Orissa who have been agi-

tated greatly by stories they have heard. I hope that they will check themselves and try to create an atmosphere of goodwill and friendship for our countrymen who are Muslims. Our great public enterprises are suffering because of this communal trouble and the whole of India's future is bound up with this.

I earnestly trust that our efforts will be directed towards creating communal harmony and that all our people and especially our newspapers will appreciate the grave dangers that are caused by communal conflict and disharmony. Let us all be careful in what we say or write which might create fear and conflict. Let us pull ourselves together and create an atmosphere of cooperation and work for the advancement of India and of all who live here as her sons. Thus only can we serve our Motherland and help in making her great, united and strong.

V

THE YOUNG INDIANS

'It must be a cause of some anxiety to leading men of Indian society at present whether a sufficient number of young men are coming up to take their place . . . For the last thirty years, a noble band of self-sacrificing patriots have worked ceaselessly and hard for the political and social amelioration of our people. That their labours have been successful and have resulted in the transformation of Indian society in several important aspects cannot be denied. Not only intelligent observers amongst Indians themselves, but every impartial foreign critic beholds with surprise the changes, that have taken place in the condition of India,' wrote a certain G. Subramania Iyer in the *Hindu* during the third week of January 1915.

THE YOUNG INDIANS

By 1915 there were a handful of Indians able to transform their ancient, tradition-steeped, and hierarchically frozen society. By 1935 this handful had grown into a nucleus almost large enough to run a modern state, though there still were not quite enough people in the higher echelons of the technical and administrative grades. Recent events in Africa have conclusively shown that politicians are not enough to run countries. Indeed, up to a point, a country can be run — as happened to France for a while after the Second World War — without politicians, but it cannot be run without technicians, administrators, soldiers and managers. Fortunately for India the Second World War acted as a forcing house. Suddenly Indians had to do many things which hitherto had been done by Britons or in Britain. As a result, by 1945 there were enough Indians to run a modern state and today, twenty years after Independence, there is a whole generation of Indians completely at home in the modern world; a generation very different from the one which preceded it. And it is upon that new generation, reared or born free, that India's future depends.

When I first came to India in 1945 the elite was still sufficiently small for us to know everybody who mattered in politics, in the administration and in the academic world; businessmen one knew by name but kept at a distance because that was the Service tradition. We did not of course know everybody personally, but the network was tight enough for everyone to be identifiable. I remember the surprise of an American friend who invited me to lunch in New York with a young Indian student and listened to the way in which we began to add up the friends we had in common. Every Indian name mentioned by either of us registered, if not directly, at least through a series of connecting links. 'But,' said the host, 'I thought there were 350 million Indians. Surely, between the two of you, you cannot know them all!' Naturally we did not, but in 1947 one could still say, without boasting that, though there were 350 million Indians,

perhaps only a few thousand of them mattered and that if one had not personally met them, one had at least heard of them.

Ten years later it had already become impossible to place everybody who mattered; so many more people had begun to matter and there were so many more fields in which people could make their name, that it was becoming increasingly difficult even for Indians to keep count. There still was an old boy's net which went roughly something like this: a few schools, like the Doon in Dehra Doon (patterned on Eton), the Scindia in Gwalior, the Cathedral in Bombay, the Modern in Delhi; a few colleges like St Stephen in Delhi, the Elphinstone in Bombay, the Presidency in Madras, the Military Academy in Poona; Government Services like the Foreign Service, the Indian Administrative Service, traineeships in big, preferably foreign, firms and a few crack academic jobs. But there were other nets as well. Colleges had multiplied; the Doon, the Presidency, St Stephens, the Military Academy had become ladders amongst many others, though nobody would dispute that they were still the best ladders. And by 1957 there were so many new faces everywhere that it had become impossible to feel totally at home at a Government House party in Bombay or a Republic Day Reception in Delhi because, although one still knew many people, there were so many more that one did not know.

I therefore fully expected that, on my return to India in 1964, there would be only a fraction of people in the elite whom I knew. My own friends had become either old and retired or very senior; they were no longer quite 'with it'. Their children who had been our friends too were now living in a world of their own, as unfettered as that of their peers in the West. In the West it does look as if children have come to terms with parents so that revolt takes the form of not cutting their hair. In India the children who become educated have been in revolt for the past fifty years and still are in revolt. Indian parents are getting used to this. What struck me this time was the extent to which the older generation goes out of its way to reduce tension by showing consideration for the young. A score of years ago all attempts to avoid clashes came from the younger generation; now it is the other way round.

Until the late fifties the emancipated took good care not to hurt the feelings of their elders, whom they treated with the

respect hierarchical societies demand. Our own contemporaries probably felt they had already made enough demands upon their parents' understanding by leading unorthodox lives of which their parents did not approve. They did not want to make the situation unnecessarily critical by quarrelling openly with their parents' beliefs as well. Delicence was not always easy; elders in India have a habit of taking their children for granted. 'My grandmother never warns us when she comes to stay; she simply arrives, complete with her paraphernalia. She does not eat from our dishes and our pots, she even brings her own glass. She does not trust our kitchen since the day she found egg shells in the dustbin,' said a friend whose husband had ceased to be a vegetarian a long time ago. She went on to explain how there had been a terrible moment the day her mother had arrived during a cocktail party. 'Fortunately Sushila's car was in the garden. I managed to hide the sausages and the bottles of whisky in it before mother could notice. Mother did ask me what all those people were drinking. I gave a vague answer. I think she must have been left with the impression it was iced-tea; since she did not come into the drawing-room she could not smell.'

Nowadays mothers and grandmothers are much more circumspect. Their instinct tells them that to arrive unexpectedly would be to ask for trouble; that to ask awkward questions could be hurtful. The same lady who wanted to know what her daughter's guests were drinking and from whom the whisky had to be hidden, did not enquire when her granddaughter married whether her fiancé was a Hindu. She was not asked to the wedding because her granddaughter in fact married a non-Hindu. She goes on seeing her darling granddaughter without batting an eyelid. 'I suppose she knows, but since nobody has told her she can pretend she does not know.' Closing one's eyes seems to have become universal; it makes it much easier for the elite to go forward and become as modern as they want.

Moreover the elite of 1945 was ill at ease because it was difficult to be modern without being, perhaps over-self-consciously, imitative. If one drank whisky instead of 'sherbat', if one smoked a pipe instead of a hookah, if one played tennis instead of hut-tut-tu, and if one enjoyed the club instead of a reading of Urdu poetry, one could never be sure that one was not trying to keep up with the British Joneses. As a result, even those Indians

who had been brought up in Britain from childhood, were with very rare exceptions not fully at ease. They did wear tweed jackets, they did not soak their hair in coconut oil; yet the tweed jacket did not look quite right, just as the haircut did not look quite natural. There used to be a vague, indefinable imitativeness about the modernity of the majority of one's Indian friends. They usually fell between two stools; either like some socialites they called Britain 'Home', or like the serious minded ones they made such a conscious effort to depart from tradition that they were deliberately silent about those parts of their ethos which had remained Indian.

Today India is full of young people who have never been to Britain, who speak a fluent if sometimes singsong English, who wear tweed jackets cut, not by Savile Row tailors, but by little derzis in Srinagar or Mohamed Ali Road, and who are yet absolutely, unashamedly modern. Because they have grown up in independence there is no twinge of imitativeness to their modernity. They are far more British than their predecessors. Thus the girls can, and indeed do, wear slacks and shorts—their mothers never did, even the modern minded ones used to play tennis in saris with the exception of Leila Row, then the All-India champion, and a few of her friends. The girls marry not only out of their caste but right across India, a thing their parents would have hesitated a long time before risking. Some indeed marry foreigners and settle abroad. Instead of taking a passionate interest in politics as their parents did, they take a passionate interest in their own jobs. This often makes the young elite as competently dull as their parents were intellectually stimulating, but it also makes them a more solid foundation for a modern state.

CASTE AND THE YOUNG

THE first time I came into contact with the somewhat disturbing ignorance of many young Indians about the conditions prevailing in their own society was in London. I had just finished writing a booklet on caste for the Institute of Race Relations.

and the Oxford University Press was publishing it. An Indian student was staying with us at the time; one of her friends who was a trainee with Oxford University Press came to see her. Until she introduced us, he did not know that she was staying with me. When he heard my name he exploded. 'I have just proof-read your *Caste Today*. It is really extraordinary how you foreigners invent, how you go out digging for dirt where there is no dirt left. I am Indian, I am a high caste Indian and I come from the U.P. which you claim is so backward. Let me tell you that I know the villages very well. My grandmother lives in a village and I spend my holidays there and I have never either seen or heard of such a thing as an eating line. In any case Untouchability has been abolished by law. Nobody in our village would dare enforce it. Why must you perpetuate Katherine Mayo?"

He went on to say a few more offensive things, he accused me of inventing for effect. I was truly annoyed and just as I was trying to explain that I had not invented a single story, that most of my facts came from well known authoritative sources and that I had to be on the safe side given my manuscript to be read for accuracy to well-known scholars in India and in London, Professor Gadgil of the Gokhale Institute walked in. Professor Gadgil, an authority on caste and one of the readers of my manuscript, was staying with me on his way to America. I could not resist the temptation of confounding my critic. 'This young man accuses me of telling lies of inventing and describing an India which no longer exists. He does not believe that I have shown the text of my booklet on caste to Indian experts.'

Professor Gadgil rolled up his umbrella, carefully took off his overcoat, hung it up and rubbed his hands in that characteristic way of his. 'Young man you and your generation know nothing about caste. You either do not know which in your case is probably the case, or you refuse to know because it would be too uncomfortable. Everybody closes their eyes to make believe that Untouchability has disappeared. The Constitution makes the enforcement of it an offence. Everybody pretends that caste no longer matters because India is modern. Both Untouchability and caste exist and it is good for us to be reminded of this. Even somebody like myself who makes it a point to follow what happens to caste and to Untouchability because I am against both

and because I want to see India modern, even I am out of touch. I may know what happens in my province, or to my caste, but I have learnt from this booklet not only some of the things that happen elsewhere but, and this is most important, how an informed and sympathetic outsider views the problem. Of course *Caste Today* is not a scholarly book, nor does it pretend to be; it is a work of vulgarization; but I can assure you that a great deal of research has gone into it, as well as years of observation.'

The young man did not look convinced, but he was too polite, too tradition bound to disagree openly with a scholar of Professor Gadgil's age and reputation. It was obvious that both my booklet and Professor Gadgil were part of an India against which he was in revolt. This was to be expected; he was fresh out of University, his family was modern, his education British, his contacts with rural India confined to visits to his grandmother so well organized that no breach of etiquette could take place. Untouchables had no cause to wish to enter her dining-room. Naturally it had never crossed his mind that they could not do so. People like that young man always remind me of Marie Antoinette's remark about cake.

I have quoted Professor Gadgil's defence of my booklet because of what happened in Kashmir when I was asked to chair the session on caste at the School of Business Management. Maurice had been invited to give some lectures to a course which the Ahmedabad School of Business Management was running with the cooperation of the Harvard Business School. As it was summer the session was held in Kashmir and many of the forty-five managers on the course had brought their wives with them. The students were between twenty-five and thirty-five years old. Since I had come with Maurice I was asked by Dr Kamala Chaudhry, who had organized the course, to take charge of the seminar on caste. For the first few days the managers who had come to attend the course had been very friendly with us. We had taken our meals together, we had chatted with their wives, we had had drinks on the lawn, and there had always been a small cluster of them round us during the breaks from work. As the day for the seminar on 'Caste and its impact on economic development' drew nearer I began to notice an estrangement. The lawn was dotted with little groups, including wives, discussing my green booklet, but nobody would come

over to chat as they did in the beginning and we were left alone with the staff of the course. I even caught a couple of hostile looks cast in my direction. On the eve of the seminar one of the managers came to ask if I would have any objection to his wife and some of the other wives coming tomorrow. I felt rather flattered, for the wives had kept assiduously away from the lectures so far and said by all means.

As I sat behind the table, facing the class reinforced by a large contingent of wives piled at the back of the room, I felt nervous. The atmosphere was laced with frozen hostility. I was at a loss to know how to begin. I suggested that since they had all read the booklet, I would like to know their reaction to my sandwich theory. Briefly the theory is that elections on universal adult franchise, by giving one vote to each voter, are reorganizing India's caste structure into a sandwich, with a thin layer of Brahmins on top, a thin layer of Untouchables at the bottom and in the middle a thick filling of the middle castes which are congealing into one, and that political power is going from the top to the filling. I was rather pleased with my sandwich theory which is expounded towards the end of the booklet. The first part of the booklet is devoted to describing caste, its origins, how it works and what influences are known to bear upon it by the various agents of change.

As if there had been a prearranged plot the group turned toward a thin tall man at the back who stood up, waved the booklet and said 'Before we begin discussing anything, there are a few things I would like to say. I have looked them up in your booklet. You say on page 23, that Untouchable Brahmins only have intercourse on Friday. I'm a Brahmin from Tanjore and let me tell you that this is pure imagination! The floodgates had been opened. I said that I was quoting from a well-known anthropologist, Kathleen Gough, who had published a study on Tanjore Brahmins. Nobody was in a mood to listen. They were all talking at once, stammering with indignation. 'What about this nonsense you keep harping on of menstrual pollution? I have never heard of it and yet my mother is very orthodox; if the rule required her to stay out of the kitchen and away from us during her periods she would do so, but she does not,' shouted a Jain whose mother, so he had previously told me, was hardly literate in Gujarati.

Kamala Chaudhry tried to bring the session under some control but failed totally despite the fact that good manners are deeply ingrained in Indian ways. Everybody felt so strongly that manners were no longer a restraining factor. I was far too interested in their reactions to mind their criticisms, and they were so angry that they would not let me finish a sentence. I even failed to get them to agree to talk one at a time, so that I could try to answer. They had never heard of eating lines. They blandly refused to admit that such things could exist. I tried to explain that one has to know that eating lines exist in order to be able to notice them; it made no difference. The ultimate argument they put forward, for everything from eating lines to menstrual pollution and the enforcement of Untouchability, was that their parents at least would have known and that they would have noticed this sort of behaviour in their parents, most of whom were still very orthodox. As the atmosphere got more and more heated someone said it was absolutely wicked of me to have written this booklet especially for publication in the outside world, since I was presenting an India which had ceased to exist a century ago, or if not a century ago at least since Independence.

'Why do you go on harping on Untouchable wells, you are another Katherine Mayo!'

'We would not mind so much if all this fantastic amount of dirt and superstition had been written in India, for Indian consumption, we know what to discount, but to have written it for abroad, for people with no knowledge of India, as an introduction to India, so that we shall be judged by what you have written, that is terrible.' I tried to tell them that Professor Karve, the Vice-Chancellor of Poona University had conducted a survey in seventy villages in Maharashtra since my booklet had been published and that in not a single one of the seventy villages had the Untouchables drawn water from the village well.

'This proves nothing! They probably had their own wells.'

I was slowly getting angry. 'Let us get back to the main points. I would like to have your comments about the channels of break down and the sandwich theory.'

It became evident that nobody had read beyond page 35. They had not read the part that was analytical and constructive although there had been plenty of time to read the last thirty-

four pages. The seminar had irretrievably degenerated into a forum for recrimination. Before leaving the classroom I managed somehow to say that what worried me in their attitude was the extent to which they were cutting themselves off from their own society and that this gap between them and the rest might lead to explosions.

That evening Kamala Chaudhry who is a trained sociologist of great experience agreed with me as we were discussing the session over dinner. 'It really was extraordinary how hostile they were. Partly it is ignorance, partly they do not want to know. It did them the world of good to have to face unpleasant facts, don't worry, I am sure that in due course their anger will fade away and they will read beyond page 35, and admit to themselves that they were wrong.'

That very evening a couple of managers came to apologize. 'We were very rude, please excuse us; we did not mean to be rude, but really,' one of them insisted, 'I have never heard of all these taboos you mention, and my parents with whom I live are very orthodox. So if I do not know that these things exist, surely they cannot be as prevalent as you say, perhaps only in some backward cut off village...'

Kamala Chaudhry's assistant, a tall Maharashtrian, said: 'You know it is extraordinary, I know exactly what they feel. I read up to page 35 with driving curiosity, marking all the bits I found intolerable. Then I did not want to read on. Somebody who had taken so much trouble to look for all that is nasty in our customs would most certainly have nothing to contribute. I had to force myself to read on and I must say that the second part of your booklet is wonderful; if anything, I would criticize you for being too lenient, too inclined to see the silver lining. I have been telling all the students that they must force themselves to read on.' They did. During the next few days odd remarks, timid overtures, proved that they had at least got as far as the sandwich; but the hurt to their national pride had been too deep for us to be more than formally on good terms again.

This refusal to see what is unpleasant is only normal. I remember how Maurice hotly denied that, according to his religion, when someone dies the whole family has to squat for seven days on the floor, tear their clothes in sign of mourning and wail loudly. This is a somewhat exaggerated description of the Jewish

custom of sitting *shiva*, a custom which is still quite literally followed by the Pathans of the unadministered territory in the North West Frontier Province where the wailing has to be both loud and public. Modern Jews make a small cut in an old piece of garment and spend the best part of a week sitting in their drawing-room entertaining the people who come to condole with sherry, tea and cakes, while tearing one's hair in loud sorrow has been replaced by snide remarks about the less liked members of the family. This too distracts from grief.

On the eve of my departure from Simagar one of the governors of the Ahmedabad School of Business Administration arrived. I told him that his students had reacted in a quite extraordinary way to my booklet. He seemed at a loss to see why; he had read it; it was such a factual study that it had made no impression on his mind, indeed it had seemed so obvious that, at the time when the programme was being drawn up, he had been against using it as a case study. 'You have not said anything new or original. Perhaps the sandwich theory is original, but that is so obvious one started that it is hardly worth saying.' He added smiling. 'It is a wonderful irony for India that the younger generation knows nothing about caste and all the nonsense that go with it. I do not understand you people. You say: "down with caste", "caste is bad for India", and then you complain because the young tell you that caste plays no part in their lives. You should be delighted your end has been achieved.'

I tried to explain that there may be a grave danger to society when people do not know how the society around them is organized. Gandhi, who wanted to do away with Untouchability and who knew exactly what was involved was always careful not to tread unnecessarily on people's feelings and tried not to set people against him. For instance, he kept saying that there is no harm in caste distinctions; that there is no earthly reason why people from different castes should dine together. He only insisted that people should occasionally dine with Untouchables, in that way he did not have to fight on all fronts. But these young managers who did not know or pretended not to know how the majority of India felt, may well cause unnecessary commotions and provoke revolts because they do not understand the obstacles to reform.

'It is exactly like the Indian National Congress under the

British. They did not want the partition of India but they kept saying that Hindus and Muslims are brothers, that there is no difference between the two and that the British are dividing to rule. Had they realized how the Muslims felt they might have come to terms with the Muslim League instead of insisting that the Congress party represented everybody and that Jinnah was a British stooge. They might have avoided Partition. To be effective one has to know what one is up against.' The governor waved his sensitive fingers dispelling some cobweb of my imagination: 'Why bother? On the contrary, because they do not know they will carry more weight; don't forget they are the leaders of tomorrow; leaders must lead, not follow.' Nevertheless, on my return to England I received a letter from the School asking for permission to reprint a large part of my booklet for internal circulation as part of a series of standard case studies.

Listening to the cheerful arguments of the governor of the School had reminded me of an argument I had once had with the foreign-born wife of a Gujarati industrialist. Like most converts this wife was more Indian than her husband. I had shown her an article on the marriage season in Bihar—a picturesque description which made the point that child marriage still takes place in India even though it is against the law. She protested this was not true any more. People did wait for their daughters and sons to be of the legal marrying age. This was an article written by a 'yellow' journalist. She was surprised it had been published in a serious newspaper. A few days later, as we were driving to a nearby picnic place, the car had to stop to make way for a small procession. 'What is this?' she asked pointing to two little boys, bedecked in tinsel and garlands, riding white mares, followed by marching beturbanned men with flared moustaches. The first boy might, at a pinch, have been ten years old, the second boy was younger, and his horse had to be dragged like a donkey. This was a typical bridal procession. The grooms were riding to their brides' homes in the traditional way. 'What is it? What are those boys doing there on those horses?' She had been in India long enough to know but her mind was refusing to accept the evidence of her own eyes. I gave the only possible answer: 'This is nothing, just an optical illusion.'

The refusal to admit the unpleasant is universal; one tries to

ignore it, or one pretends it applies to other people, or to other places. On my return from Kashmir I had been asked to give a talk about my impressions of India to the India International Centre—a Centre for scholars from all over the world. My chairman was a retired Indian Civil Servant from Bengal whom I had known over the years and who had never been known for the sharpness of his mind. I was frank during my talk, and I made the point I had made to the governor of the Ahmedabad School of Business Administration about the dangers of the younger generation not knowing enough about caste. I was not heckled too much on that point. I had said among other things that the Kashmiris did not want to stay with India; this did annoy the audience. Somebody even shouted that I should be deported. But what really did surprise me was the summing up of my chairman. 'As far as caste is concerned,' he said after paying me the jejune compliments chairmen pay guest speakers, 'there may be caste in the rest of India. But, ladies and gentlemen, as you all know, I come from Bengal and in Bengal at least there has never been any question of caste.' I had recently reviewed *Bengal peasant from time to time*, a survey of a village not very far from Calcutta. The book is written by T. K. Basu, an Indian scholar who admirably describes the way in which caste works in Bengal where it is in some ways even more rigorous than in Central India. In Central India eating lines are separated from each other by space; in Bengal they are separated by time as well so as to eliminate all possibility of pollution however accidental.

My chairman's lack of intellectual integrity was staggering. That the young did not know, did not wish to know, about the complicated taboos of caste was understandable, but the old could not pretend that these taboos did not exist. During my remaining six weeks in India I found that among my friends and the people I met, those under thirty-five often genuinely did not know much about caste beyond the taboos on marriage, whereas those above thirty-five did and deplored it especially since many of them had had to fight against some particular manifestation of caste.

On my return to London I discussed the issue with my friend Lakshmi, one of the most original and learned exponents of Hindu thought. Lakshmi disagreed with my interpretation.

'You are far too generous. No, we all live in an ostrich world. Do you know that when Carstairs' admirable book *The Twice Born* came out, I bought a number of copies and lent them to many of my friends who are precisely the twice born, especially Brahmins of whose taboos he speaks. I had been hoping for lively discussions. I got no reaction. When I ventured to ask what they thought of the book they looked bland and either said they had never read such nonsense or that the taboos to which Carstairs refers do not apply to their own family which is far too modern to observe menstrual pollution and all that. In fact, of course, they were all lying. Menstrual pollution among Brahmins is very much a taboo. But we all have in us an endless gift for self-deception.'

Lakshmi lit another cigarette, curled up in the large sofa of her attic flat and I sighed. 'Have I ever told you the story of Thata* and the butterfly.'

'You mean Scherazade and the butterfly of King Solomon?'

'No, I mean Thata and the butterfly, but of course now that you mention it, it might belong to the Arabian Nights. The significance of my butterfly story is however far reaching because it illustrates the sort of minds we Indians have. Thata suddenly developed a rash on his arm, a very painful form of zona which spread on to his chest. The doctors could not stop the pain and Amma† began to worry. So Amma took Thata to the best doctor who said it might be a sort of skin T.B. As it turned out the doctor was wrong; it was a nervous condition which cured itself as soon as Thata got his way with Government about the size of cooperatives. For an old lady like my grandmother, though, the word T.B. is a terrible word and so she categorically refused to believe that Thata could have T.B., even of the skin. She searched for another explanation. I was there when she found it and her explanation is the more remarkable, at least to me, in that she is a cultured and very intelligent person. She blamed a butterfly. One evening, Amma said, a butterfly had settled up on Thata's arm and had bitten him. Grandfather protested that butterflies are not known to bite. Amma dismissed him with a tart, "You have forgotten, you yourself complained of a sting at the time and I had to dab

* Maternal grandfather in Tamil.

† Maternal grandmother.

the sting with eau-de-Cologne. Yes. It was after the butterfly bit you that the itch and the rash began." In no time Thata had been converted to the butterfly-bite-story. You know what an extraordinarily clever man Thata was, how well balanced and dispassionate. Well, it was therefore the more extraordinary to hear him explain, as if it were a matter of importance, how he had been reluctantly driven to the conclusion that he was suffering from a very unusual skin condition caused by the bite of a butterfly. After some time he could even describe the markings on the butterfly's wing. Now, if Thata could so deceive himself rather than face the unpleasant possibility that he had skin T.B., you cannot blame Indians for pretending that caste does not exist, that there are no taboos. And let me tell you, Taya, that when you say that those over thirty-five admit to caste, they only admit to it in principle. They will wriggle out of being pinned down to those particular taboos of which they are subconsciously ashamed. Or they may decry them loudly and say they no longer believe in them and that they no longer practice them. But all this is like the butterfly, make believe. What happens in many cases is that confession becomes a substitute for action. This, I may say, is not unique to India, it is universal.' As always Lakshmi was right. The West has its taboos, which are either rationalized into virtues, or concealed. I have always wondered how an Asian socio-anthropologist would describe Western society had he not been exposed to Western culture.

NEW STANDARDS

ALREADY in 1960 the younger generation had become emancipated; but this emancipation was confined to the elite. Numerically it was still so small that it had to be self-conscious, self-critical and on the defensive. The evening I spent with Usha in 1960 was very typical in every way of how this restricted vanguard elite felt.

Usha who is the married daughter of an old friend of ours had asked her friends to a farewell party in my honour. The setting was modern, yet quite unmistakably Indian. There were tribal

rugs, brass and clay pots used by villagers as rice measures, and everybody sat on the floor, in almost Japanese style. I had brought as a parting gift Papillon, my tall, black pottery butterfly-eared fertility horse. Papillon, whom I had picked up many years ago in a little village in Bankura, was too brittle to survive the trip to England, and so I decided to take him to a good home where his great beauty would be appreciated. The previous generation did not appreciate fertility horses for their beauty, but for their capacity to propitiate the gods. My older friends had smiled indulgently at my enthusiasm for Papillon; our servants had made little pujas to him in the hope that their mistress might be granted another son; however, when no child appeared, they began to neglect Papillon, the barren fertility horse.

Usha's party was quite special. Except for myself and her father, everybody was young. At my instigation the young had taken a look at themselves in an anticipation of the American teach-in. The result had been most instructive. They felt that the young Indians were angry, not because it is fashionable to be angry, 'John Osborne and all that!' but because things had improved. In the past, the young had no place in society, they had no entity; they were merely an extension of their parents and from the time of their birth to that of their death every decision had been made for them. The decisions were made by their parents, by the caste council, by the astrologers. As one young architect put it, 'We could not even decide what to eat. We had to eat spinach on a particular festival, not at any other time would spinach be cooked, for the taste, or the vitamins. And the same was of course true of marriage, and of jobs!' Nisha, a beautiful teacher of English who had broken with tradition by marrying outside her religion, chipped in: 'We are angry because for the first time in all our reincarnations we have become individuals instead of being links in a chain. For the first time we are *we*, we are no longer *they*.' Rohit, a manager in an advertising agency, added: 'We cannot afford to compromise, to compromise would mean to get lost, to be swallowed back by tradition.'

Barely four years later fertility horses had become the craze. I was told by the Cottage Industries Emporium in Calcutta that they sell very well; indeed the Government of India has made a

stamp with one on it, and in Delhi they are sold to American tourists, king size, in brass. Much more striking than the sudden craze for fertility horses, however, was the fact that the angry young Indians were no longer confined to the children of one's friends, to the elite of the post-war decades. The elite had spread so much and there were so many angry young Indians about that, perhaps by halo effect, one even found them in small towns, and in the lower middle class, where anger was quite new.

My first contact with the new Indian elite was in Kashmir. To begin with, the wives of the managers were dressed in a way quite new. Until 1960 slacks and shorts were worn by a few young women who belonged very much to the old elite—the group led by the Maharani of Jaipur at one end of the social spectrum and by Oxbridge economists at the other; but in either case slacks and shorts were worn privately—with the glaring exception of Uma my egg queen who used to feed her hens in shorts even then. In most cases however, Western pants were worn privately, mostly by those who had made the West their spiritual home. The few, and there were a few who wore slacks, though not shorts, who were in transition, somehow looked ill at ease in their fancy dress; their slacks were badly tailored or, clung disapprovingly from shy hips. Whatever the reason, they did not fit. But in the Srinagar of 1964 slacks, blue jeans, tight après-ski pants were de rigueur for the wives of the young managers. Even little Mrs Desai, whose husband was also on the course—although she did not make up, did not cut her hair but wore a long glistening plait at the back of her neck, just like a school girl, and covered her head with a corner of her sari in the evening—even she wore blue jeans during the day. Little Mrs Desai was a classical dancer by profession. What was so vanguard about her was that although Indian dancing had become respectable over a decade ago, it had not yet become a profession. Little Mrs Desai who looked so proper, so timid, who lived with her in-laws, rich and respectable Gujarati millowners, danced for money; professionally, instead of as a hobby, for charity.

Mrs Desai, like the other wives, represented a leap forward, an extension of the elite to a quite new layer of society. Hers was a traditional Gujarati mill-owners background, a very Indian and vegetarian background in which girls did not wear slacks,

let alone dance in public for money. The other wives, as indeed their husbands, did not belong to the old elite; they were by and large the sons and daughters of self-made men who had thrived during the Second World War rising from nothing to the ownership of medium sized businesses. Except for a couple of managers employed by large firms, Indian or foreign, the others were sons or sons-in-law of founder-owners and belonged very largely to the various trading castes. Trading castes in India are notorious for their mercantile inventiveness and their social immobility. It was therefore very striking to see how deeply modern in outlook as well as in wardrobe these young people had become.

In India — unlike the Beatle-ized West — male clothes still provide little room for self-expression; this fortunately is not true of women's clothes. Thus Maya, the wife of Natesh, a director in an airconditioning firm owned by his father, was a perpetual sartorial surprise and joy. During the day Maya wore après-ski pants and Californian blouses, blue jeans and Indian raw silk shirts, treader pants and embroidered *cholis* — those delightfully revealing peasant brassieres. In the evening, she dressed like a dream out of some Indian film, in a *kameez* (the tight-fitting shirt which hangs over the salwar, the full-legged trousers worn by men and women in the Punjab) so tight-fitting that I kept wondering why it did not split when she sat down. Under her sleeveless *kameez* she wore not the *salwar* of the Hindu women but the tight fitting *jodhpurs* of the Muslim women of the Punjab, the trousers made world famous by Nehru. 'It is so much more flattering to the legs,' Maya explained, patting the wrinkles of her trousers into rings round her ankles. 'Some of the girls practically starve themselves to be able to look nice in their skin tight *kameeses*; it is good for their figures, they no longer stuff themselves with *kulfi* and *halwa*.'

Maya's story was both surprising and typical of the new trends in more ways than one. She had fallen in love with Natesh, 'literally the boy next door' as she pouted. Their marriage might have been arranged for they both belonged to the same sub-caste and the same regional area. The only difference between them was that her father's father had made the money and a lot more than Natesh's father, so that Maya's mother had already gone to college whereas Natesh's mother was illiterate even in Punjabi. Yet Maya's illiterate mother-in-law was fondest

not of Maya, the good traditional wife who lived in her husband's house and let her Mataji do all the bossing, but of Margaret, the American, and very difficult to please, daughter-in-law whom her younger son had brought back from his time at Chicago University. Margaret had come with the children and had taken a dislike to the Indian climate; so she had gone back to America where her husband had found a good job as an electronics engineer. 'It is true she comes often, with the children, for a holiday; but she does not stay with Mataji, she takes a flat in a hotel. I do not mind her being the favourite it only surprises me. I am far too happy with Natesh and too busy with my school to mind,' Maya shook her pony-tail. Together with a friend from her Miranda College days she was running a kindergarten which was thriving, she was designing educational toys as well. She had no time to run the house and was delighted to leave it all to Mataji. 'That way it is all done the way Natesh is used to from his childhood and when we feel like meat we go quietly to the Moti Mahal for Tandoori chicken, or to Gaylords or the Gymkhana for steaks.' What Maya found puzzling, however, was Mataji's choice of a favourite. On any old-fashioned calculations it ought to have been Maya. Yet, next to Margaret there was the Christian Air Force officer who married Natesh's sister after she had reached the ripe age of thirty-two. 'Mataji had given up hope of Parvati ever getting married. I suppose, that explains it.' Until her marriage Parvati worked as Personnel Officer in the airconditioning factory; now, like any service wife she was following her husband from base to base.

Listening to Maya brought me back to less than a score of years ago when it was still terrible for a daughter to remain single in her mid twenties. Indeed, listening to Maya on her Mataji was like listening to the wild rushing by of time magnified by the echo of change. Maya's Mataji was, as I discovered that summer, not all that exceptional any longer. There were now enough cases of people marrying not just all over India but all over the world for people to take mixed marriages in their stride.

I met in Calcutta a young man who was introduced as 'the representative of the new India through his family'. This young man who belonged to an orthodox Bengali Brahmin family—and Bengali Brahmins are still much more orthodox and con-

servative than, say, Tamil Brahmins—explained why he was typical through his family of the new India. 'I have taken the plunge all right. You see, I have four brothers and two sisters. One sister is married in Switzerland; she is a doctor and he is an engineer in a Swiss firm. My other sister, who is a teacher, married a Punjabi who works in the Bhilai steel mill. One brother of mine who is in the air force married a Maharashtrian doctor; one brother who is in business on his own married an Assamese teacher; one brother who is in the Indian Administrative Service married a social worker from Madras; and my last brother, the one who is a chartered accountant, married a Parsi who is a Labour Welfare Officer in Calcutta. Myself? I am not yet married.'

Indians had married outside their community, their province, their religion and their country before, but they had been the exception. Nehru's eldest sister's first marriage had been to a Muslim, her second to a Maharashtrian Brahmin; Nehru's youngest sister had married a Gujarati Bania. The Nehru girls were profoundly Westernized, it was not for nothing that one of them was called Nan and the other Betty. In time the number of marriages out of bounds, had grown. Nehru's own daughter married a Parsi from the U.P., a Maharashtrian friend of mine had a brother who married an Assamese; some well-to-do Parsis used to marry French women just as Maharajahs were sometimes prone to play the foreign field, but those were exceptions and much talked about.

• Now that more and more people were marrying for love as more and more women were getting educated not only in India but also abroad, the marriage mix was becoming ever more mixed. In the past, young Indians marrying foreigners tended more often than not to marry landladies' daughters—very few Indian women married foreigners indeed. This was to be expected since in those days there were few girls at Oxbridge where most Indians went, so that they naturally tended to marry, if abroad, the girl they met, namely the daughter of their landlady.

Lower middle class wives of upper class Indians fitted ill into Indian society. Westerners could not forget their origin, Indians resented their complexion. Caught between two worlds many such Western wives tended to behave either like C. D.

Deshmukh's first wife who retired to Britain to settle in suburbia or more often like her contemporaries who behaved more memsahibishly than the stiffest of memsahibs, caricatures from the *Plain Tales of the Hills*, the perpetual embarrassment of their pushed about husbands. The exceptions were the Western wives with a college education, women like Fori Nehru, the wife of the Indian Ambassador to Washington. They had no problems whether, like Fori, they decided to Indianize, or like Lady Hydari, the wife of the late Governor of Assam, they decided to remain unremittably Western. Upper class values fit very well into India's hierarchically conscious society. Whether they Indianized or not, they were conspicuous. To this day Fori is proud of her Hungarian-Jewish origin and makes as much of a fetish of cooking succulent goulashes as tasty curries. She cultivates fellow Hungarians, yet she is more graciously Indian than her formidable relation, Mrs Pandit who is more at home in the West than in India. Lady Hydari, by contrast, chose to remain firmly Swedish and surrounded herself with anthropologists, archeologists and artists, making tribes and crafts her hobby in a perpetual discovery of India.

Today things have changed. There are so many more girls from the West who meet Indians at university that the large number of educated foreign wives precludes any one of them standing out like Fori, as an example of Isation, or like Lady Hydari as an example of un-Isation. At last, lost in numbers, foreign wives can be just themselves; just as Indian girls who marry foreigners can, if they so wish, settle outside India without feeling that they are betraying their country. More and more of them do precisely that, fortified in their choice by the ever growing number of young Indian couples who also settle abroad.

By and large most foreign wives settling in India tend to become passively Indian. Typical, in my experience at least, of this new attitude, though carried to extremes, is Mrs Shah whom I met at Anand, the rural dairy which I visited so many times. Mrs Shah married her husband in Australia when he was a trainee at the Veterinary College. On their return to Anand she found herself the only foreigner permanently in residence apart from the Scottish missionaries a few miles away. In order to be able to entertain her in-laws she ran a vegetarian home; this

had the additional advantage of making it easier to manage within a modest family budget. Mrs Shah's children speak Gujarati even at home. 'I did not want them to be different from the other children at school and I was afraid that if I spoke English to them they would become confused.' Mrs Shah feels that there is plenty of time in which to teach them their mother's tongue. 'Because of my children I wear a sari. I do not want their little friends to feel they enter a foreign home when they come to play.' Gradually Mrs Shah had become a perfect Gujarati, the apple of her mother-in-law's eyes. She behaved in a more old-fashioned way than the other members of the Shah family. When, unlike Mrs Shah, the foreign wife feels it is too great a strain to adapt to Indian circumstances, especially when the couple has to live away from a big town as is increasingly the case with the new middle class projects coming up, she persuades her husband to settle abroad. In a time of full employment and technological security this is a rare view. Nowadays the foreign wife hardly ever meets the ill-adapted foreign wife in India.

Over my years in India I met many types of wives, from the 'domesticated wife' who maintained that one can always tell a lady by the way she crooks her little finger over the rim of her teacup to the Indian wife of a British administrator who called Britain 'home', her husband's 'doll' imported her saris from Paris 'because only in France do they know how to make those divinely flimsy georgette' which fall so raciously and insisted on her children going to prep school in Britain because 'only in England do they know how to teach children'. However, I still had to meet this Westernized Indianized counterpart.

It was in Calcutta over dinner that I met Austro-American Sushila. To do everybody justice at that party she got just as much on other people's nerves as she did on mine but everybody was very kind to her out of consideration for her doting husband. Sushila seemed to bask in paradox. Lamenting herself with the inferiority of Western clothes, Western competitiveness, Western materialism, Western callousness, Western sex equality, she praised the wisdom of her mother-in-law, the dignity of the

* The term domesticated was reserved for people of British origin who had made India their home and did not quite belong to society. They were largely employed in the police and the railways; they were looked upon much as Anglo-Indians though they themselves insisted on the purity of their blood and looked down on the half-castes.

caste system and the felicity of life in an underdeveloped country. The lady doctor next to me smiled indulgently and whispered as we moved over to the dining table, 'Sushila is *so* pretty, and we are all so pleased with her efforts to adapt and the way she makes Chandra happy; but we do not take her seriously. Just imagine, when I bob my hair *she* grows a bun, when we give up painting our hands with henna she goes in for elaborate designs not only on her hands but on her feet also, as if she were a bride or a dancer. She is trying to get her mother-in-law to hold her out as an example to us, all. She even had her son's horoscope drawn up the proper way despite Chandra's protests. And trust Sushila to be vegetarian. I am sure that if she were not an Untouchable she would go to the temple every day with her grandmother-in-law.' Sushila, as if to prove the doctor's point, was saying: 'I would not give my consent if our son wanted to marry a foreigner. It would break my heart I tell you.'

Chandra laughed. 'But darling, I did marry a foreigner and after a while even my grandmother did not object. You know how much she loves you.'

'That is just it. I know how she must have felt at first and I do not want to feel the same. If our daughter marries a foreigner that will not matter quite so much; girls after all do not count.'

Akhil, our host, teased her, 'Come off it; don't be more royalist than the king. Have some *hilsa* in mustard sauce, my cook makes it rather well.'

'Fish!' Sushila pouted. 'You *know* I am a vegetarian. No *hilsa* for me. Give me rice and curds. You always forget that I am a vegetarian, you must do it on purpose, you naughty boy.' Sushila was ridiculous, but not more ridiculous in her Easternization than many young Indians had been in their Westernization, only a score of years ago.

Akhil drove me back. In the car he explained. 'I invited Sushila because I thought you might like to meet her to see, in reverse, what we used to be like. Life must have been very hard for my father's generation; to be always on the defensive cannot be fun; it is so distorting. Sushila is highly exceptional; it is Kuku, you know, the lady doctor next to you at the table, who is the typical one, thank God for that.'

Kuku was a very remarkable girl as I had discovered before Sushila hogged the conversation. A Bengali Brahmin, Kuku had

married a rich industrialist. Kuku's family was one of the oldest and best in Bengal. She studied medicine at Oxford and returned to India married. Her family said nothing although her husband was neither Brahmin nor a Bengali, they knew that one cannot tell Kuku anything. She had two children and worked as a pediatrician earning a lot of money. However, three of her evenings a week were devoted to helping Mother Teresa the Catholic nun in her leper work at the dispensary. Things had changed in Calcutta even Akbul, that hard headed businessman had given money and a building to Mother Teresa; as he said shyly 'perhaps it is her selfless example which is infectious. But you know Mrs Zinkin's notion that things are happening to us the gilded badilogs of Bengal since she came on the scene. We have begun to *care*, we have begun to have *social conscience*; we have become do-gooders not just Kaku but believe it or not, all of us. Those who do not help with their own time help with money; I can assure you that this is quite new.'

He did not have to assure me. I knew. Fifteen years ago when we lived in Calcutta the only Bengali badilog I knew personally who worked for the poor was Mira Chandham in her handicraft rehabilitation centre started during the Bengal Famine of 1943. The fashionable badilog attitude to the ills of the poor was that expressed by my beautiful friend Shakuntala who used to explain with immense complacency 'I am born a Brahmin; it has been my fate to marry a foreign Untouchable; I have thus become an Untouchable myself. If I see a starving Untouchable leper on the road I do not help him for that would be interfering with his fate. He is a begging Untouchable leper in retribution for sins in a previous life.' Such an attitude had apparently become out of date. But Shakuntala been fifteen years younger she too would, like Kaku have stepped out of her ivory tower and helped the leper.

THE WOMEN

WHAT struck me most in India in 1964 was the tremendous leap forward in the position of women. Everywhere women

were coming into their own, making more or less spectacular progress. This, however, did not surprise me. In *India Changes!* I had already noted the alacrity with which Indian women take advantage of every opportunity to emancipate themselves. But now my most optimistic expectations had been outstripped by events.

Let me give a few examples.

The Chief Minister of the U.P., India's largest and most troublesome State from the point of view of Congress factions, was a woman. Sucheta Kripalani, an old friend of mine of Kerala days. Sucheta had not only been elected Chief Minister on merit, but she had been elected in open defiance of Nehru who had broken every political precedent by going and canvassing against her because he knew that Sucheta has too independent a mind to be a 'yes man'. After Sucheta's election Nehru and a faction of the U.P. Congress did their best to unseat her, but her rule has been so firm, so practical and so fair that at the time of writing she is still Chief Minister, the first Chief Minister in the U.P. to be above factions, she has done a great deal to rid the party of its corruption and casteism, and a Public Service Commission has recently reported that she has improved administrative standards more than anybody else. Another woman who has plunged into politics with extraordinary success is Ayesha, the beautiful Maharani of Jodhpur who got elected to Parliament on the right wing opposition Swatantra ticket, polling more votes than anybody else in India. Ayesha works so hard at being a parliamentarian that she has made a place for herself in Delhi and earned the reluctant respect of seasoned politicians who thought at first that she would contribute nothing to Parliament except her elegance.

In the trade unions equally women have made their mark, a mark unequalled by women in the West. Thus the General Secretary of the Indian National Port and Dock Workers' Federation and President of the National Union of Dockers, Dr Maitreyee Bose, M.L.A., is a woman while the leader of the All India Railway Workers' Union is also a woman.

The most extraordinary case of the advance of women which I came across, however, was that of Wing Commander Chanda. When I collapsed from heat exhaustion in the plane bringing me back from Jodhpur, the pilot had to radio for an air force

doctor to meet the plane at Agra. The doctor was Wing Commander Chanda, a homely woman attached to the paratroops with a number of jumps in action to her credit. And beside Dr Chanda there is a woman doctor who is a Commander in the Navy.

I could not go back to India without paying a visit to Uma, my egg queen of *India Charities*. Uma had at last found and built her egg-farm two hours' drive away from Bombay, on the seashore, within walking distance of a fishing village. The farm itself is a monument to Uma's dogged determination. It had, at the time of my visit, 10,000 pedigree hens. But it is not an easy farm to run because of the difficulty Uma has had in finding a driver willing to stay so far from the city, in a village like Kihim. So, in addition to running the farm, Uma had to drive her egg-van into town to sell her eggs. My old driver, Mahomed Ismail, promised to ask among his friends if he knew somebody, but he later informed me that nobody would be willing to live there because the place had ghats or, as he had been told in the village.

Uma told me what had happened to her while we were on the veranda of the tumble-down village house which has been her residence for the past four years. First I had to house the hens; my turn would come later. 'You see over there,' she pointed across a patch of jungle to a concrete structure, 'After we have had coffee I shall take you to my house. It is not yet finished, but it is a lovely house. I am counting the days till I can move in. You see, before starting with the house I had to make a profit. I have just turned the corner since last year and so I have started on the house. This place is very hot and so I have had to live on the veranda, and I sleep here also. There is plenty of room but it is very primitive, there is a trench latrine in the garden, there behind that bamboo screen, and there is no running water. My house will have all the modern comforts of course, and it will have privacy.'

We visited the new house, still a long way from completion, but already sufficiently advanced for one to see that it would be a very nice modern fortified villa. 'My parents insisted on the high wall at the back and a structure that could offer protection in case of something going wrong in the village. Actually the only things one has to guard against here are snakes; the

villagers are far too afraid of me to do me any harm and so I am perfectly safe sleeping in the open.' Uma did not even have a revolver. 'There are my dogs and the ghosts to guard me. You see, that land I got was relatively cheap because the fishing hut and the land were abandoned. Nobody dared live there, it is supposed to be haunted land. It lies between the Muslim cemetery and the Hindu cremation ground. I do not need a revolver, I have my ghosts to protect me.'

She paused for a moment and then added 'Besides I have no time to think about what could happen to me, I am far too busy looking after the farm. I do have people from the village who come and help during the day, but I have to supervise everything, by the time it is dark I am ready to sleep, almost like my hens.' Uma's farm is very successful, her idea of breeding hens for eggs the American way has been copied by many people, especially by film stars who employ managers. Uma's farm has been rated the best in Asia by a foreign foundation and she cooperates with industry by testing their chicken feeds on her hens. Suddenly Uma's face became serious. 'Aaya, what are you going to write about me? All that rubbish about my being a woman? My being a woman's irrelevant, what you can say, if you write is that mine is the most efficient egg farm, that my hens win all the prizes, but for heavens sake leave out the feminine angle.'

Sucheta Kripalani, Wang Chung-chang, Chanda, Uma are all exceptional women. Even more impressive was the progress made by relatively ordinary women. In Delhi I met at dinner a young girl who is a section manager on a bank in Britain; she might have rated a profile in the *Woman's Image*. In India she was unself-conscious, nobody thought she had achieved anything special. Over drinks I met a woman Deputy Secretary in External Affairs, only after she had gone was I told of her position; she had let her husband, a Deputy Secretary in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, do all the talking.

But nowhere was the change so striking as in remote Jaisalmer. Jaisalmer is as remote a place as one can find in India outside the tribal tracts. A town of 8,000 people, Jaisalmer City is surrounded by desert and lies, forgotten, near the Pakistan border, in addition it is the capital of an ex-princely state which used to be one of the most old-fashioned. Yet the

Maharajah's daughters told me that as soon as they would finish school, they would go on to study at university; they would not get married before getting at least a B.A. and the ruler's niece hoped to study medicine. The Maharanee, a Nepalese princess who was herself married long before her teens, said, looking at her little daughters, 'One does not know what can happen, girls must be educated. And it does not matter if they do not marry a prince; what matters is that they find a good husband, from a good family, with a good profession.'

In the Jaisalmer club bungalow which I was sharing with a deputy sub-inspector of sales tax and his family, I heard one evening a knock at my door. The sub-inspector's daughter stood in the doorway. 'Do you permit? I want to practice English, may I come?' I offered her a chair and we began to chat. Her English was poor and she was very shy. Only those who know India well can appreciate the change in the position of girls which makes it possible for the fourteen-year-old daughter of a petty official on a couple of pounds a week to knock at the door of a foreign memsahib like myself. Radha was reading *Christmas Carols* and finding it very difficult. She had only done a year and a half of English at school. I told her father I want to be a lawyer.'

I teased her: 'Your father will marry you off long before that. As soon as you pass your Intermediate.'

Radha shook her head indignantly. 'No. Mother is with me; and in the home it is Mother who says. Father will wait till I get my LL.B. to get me married, but he will not have to give me dowry. And I can select my husband.' What Radha meant was that she would have a great deal to say to what sort of husband her father would have to arrange for her. 'I want modern-minded husband, and handsome.'

Radha is not unique. Emancipation is filtering right down to the villages. Thus, according to a recent article in the *Economic Weekly*,* in a Punjab village where all the girls of school-going age went to school there were half a dozen girls who actually rode on men's bicycles to go to the high school in the nearest town, a revolution in a country where until yesterday unmarried nubile girls had to be chaperoned everywhere. In the same village there were a few girls studying at college and one girl had been flown out to Canada to marry a man of her own caste who had

* May 15 1965 p. 615

settled there. Some of the young women in that village had taken jobs – one as inspectress of schools, two as teachers in their own village.

Until a few years ago Indian marriages were arranged by the parents according to the requirements of sub-caste, horoscope and prospects. Children had little say in the matter. But now more and more girls are getting educated. That summer of 1964 there had been more girls registered at Delhi University for B.A. courses than boys because more girls had passed the entrance examination. And everywhere, at all levels girls were doing better than boys. In every school I visited be it a primary village school or a city high school when I asked the teachers who came first in the class a girl would be asked to stand up three times out of four.

With this female education there has come a shift from the *arranging* to the *proposing* of marriage. Parents still have to find the bride or the groom but in addition to satisfying the old rules they now have to include the personal requirements of the boy or the girl. As a result shopping around for a husband or a wife has become increasingly difficult and I met a number of parents who tried to urge their children to choose for themselves, as is done in the West but unless they fall in love, the children much prefer their parents to take all the trouble.

I still remember how the granddaughter of a friend of ours thrust her shopping list into her grandfather's reluctant hand. 'You must find me a husband from the same sub-caste, he must come from our town because I do not want to have to get used to new ways, he must be an engineer, he must play tennis well, he must dance modern ball-room dances be tall and handsome.'

Her grandfather wailed, 'Why can't you fall in love, I thought you were an emancipated girl'.

She simply giggled 'Why should I? After all it is your duty.'

He smiled lamely while Maurice suggested 'Get from the Steel Ministry the list of their engineers. The names will tell you about the caste, find out which are not married, investigate each one and you may find the rare bird she wants.'

The shopping list can be even more exclusive as in the case of Saraswati, a Tamil Brahmin girl aged 24 who worked in Tanjore for an American anthropologist. Saraswati had a B.A. in

sociology and was in no hurry to get married. She informed her parents she would only marry if they found her a husband with the following qualifications: he had to be a Tamil Brahmin, he had to work for a Government steel plant, he had to be sent abroad for long enough to take his wife with him, he had to have no mother because she did not want to be bothered by a mother-in-law, he had to be willing to let his wife go on working, he had to be fond of classical Indian music, and he had to be a vegetarian like herself. The American anthropologist thought that Saraswati would never get married, so did her parents. However Saraswati's eighteen year old sister got engaged to be married, but since tradition demands that the eldest sister gets married first, she could not get married until Saraswati's requirements had been met. Her fiancé's family set about helping to find a husband for Saraswati, they succeeded and Saraswati was married in time to go with her husband to Germany for a two years training course, and on his return to the Rourkela Steel Plant Saraswati will teach in the high school.

Detailed shopping lists are now confined to girls. A look at the matrimonial advertisements shows that it grows too have views. The parents of boys ask for girls who must not only be fair, musical, versed in home economics but must also be educated, and there is a crying demand for brides who are government servants, 'medicos' or 'teachers'.

It is the done thing for visitors to India to look at the matrimonial advertisements in the newspapers and to make fun. Few outsiders realize that these ads are usually inserted by the parents, that many marriages result from them, or that an ad like 'wanted, young widow, spell both tragedy and progress and not a salacious jest. I always follow the matrimonial ads with great care because they are a very reliable indicator of trends and social changes among the people who know English, people from senior Government servants to petty employees, from merchants to industrialists. Peasants and the poor do not advertise in the newspapers.

In the *Hindustan Times* of 28th June 1964 there were 226 matrimonial ads. About half of them had been inserted by the parents of boys. Parents of boys and of girls were looking more or less for the same things. Thus, of the girls wanted or offered 38 were matriculates; 75 were B.A.s, B.Sc.s or B.T.s; 20 had

their M.A.s. or M.D.s and only in 63 cases were educational specifications not mentioned. Eighteen girls were employed, mostly as teachers, government servants or doctors – one was a nurse, not long ago an unheard of profession for an unmarried Brahmin girl. As it happens, on that day there were 18 boys wanting working brides, while a divorced doctor was looking for a divorced or widowed wife. Girls with 'convent education', that is education in English, were in heavy demand. Boys in the Foreign, Engineering and Administrative Services and trainees with big foreign firms, in that order, were similarly in great demand.

Most fascinating was the age of the girls. A decade ago the girls would have been mostly in their late teens or their very early twenties. Now there was only one girl aged 16, one aged 17, one aged 18; there were 7 girls aged 19. The majority were between 20 and 23, and there were 6 girls of 24, 5 of 25, 4 of 26, 2 of 27, 1 of 28, 2 of 29, 5 of 30, and one ad read: 'Decent match for trained graduate Arora Teachress 31. No Bar.'

A few actual ads will illustrate very clearly what people look for:

'Matches for 2 sisters (1) M.B.B.S., D.G.O., aged 29 years, in. U.P Govt service. (2) M.A. (Geog.) aged 23 years. Lecturer in Girls' College. Both beautiful and well versed in household affairs. Box . . .'

'Match for Sikh virgin 29. teacheress drawing 325/. Box . . .'

'Suitable match for handsome double graduate Brahmin girl, 26, working 400/-. No C/D. Box . . .' (No C/D means no caste no dowry.)

'Match 29-33 for young Delhi Headmistress, B.A., B.Ed., getting 300/-. Brother qualified experienced engineer, responsible post. Box . . .'

'Rajput bachelor well educated and nicely settled in life, handsome under 27, for beautiful accomplished girl M.A.; B.Ed., 23 yrs. Decent marriage. Write with full particulars. Box . . .' (Rajputs are both feudal and traditional people.)

'Wanted matches for two Punjabi handsome bachelors, 27, 29, doing Ph.D. Engineering and International Trade in America. Visiting India for eight weeks. Apply with details to Box . . .'

'Wanted well educated girl for Jat Sikh 33, graduate (clean

shaven) from respectable family. Good remunerative office job in London. Own house. Caste immaterial Box . . .'

'Wanted an educated homely girl about 30 for an Indian Hindu bachelor, middle age, working as an officer in an international organization in Switzerland. Girl should be prepared to live abroad for 2 years. Apply with detail and photograph . . .'

'Match, preferably doctor, or medical accountant, well settled in India or willing to settle abroad for Hindu Punjabi girl 22, earning 900/- abroad. At present in India on leave. Caste no bar. Box . . .'

As a footnote to the changing position of women it may be worth noting that I heard as many complaints about domestic servants in India in 1964 as I did in Kensington. Indian servants have become very expensive and, except for the old ones, they are no longer particularly devoted or skilled.

As a result of the increase in the cost of living and of the small size of modern accommodation in which no provision is often made for resident domestics, younger Indian women from the upper middle class are beginning to run their homes like their sisters in the West. Many of my younger friends have only one all-purpose servant and they often look after their children themselves, even if they work. It is becoming increasingly frequent to have no private servant at all but to have part-time servants. Thus in the newest parts of Delhi, Calcutta or Bombay, in the areas where people live in cooperatively owned flats or in Government accommodation, communal specialized servants have sprung up, doing the rounds of ten to twenty clients every day on weekly wages. The young housewife now dusts her own furniture while the part-time sweeper dusts the floors, cleans the bathroom and makes the beds; she does her own shopping and cooking and washing up, leaving the scrubbing of cooking pots, the stove and the polishing of brass and silver to another part-time servant; she does all the family's personal laundering, including her husband's shirts and white trousers, leaving the ironing and the sheets to another specialist who comes perhaps twice a week.

This austere pattern is becoming more and more widespread. Our friend Zorine, now that her children were grown up, made no bones about the fact that she only had one young boy for all chores and did the cooking herself although her husband is a

very senior Government official indeed. 'When we have a party I borrow the cook of one of my friends, the cook gets a tip and I save a lot of money that way. I assure you, Taya, times have changed. To think that when we first met Maurice before he was married he had eleven servants! We of course, being a couple with children, had more. Yes, times have changed. We are building a flat for our retirement in Poona and we are making it as labour-saving as if it were in New York. But what beats me is that we all know that there is chronic unemployment, yet nobody wants to work as a domestic servant any more, they all want to work in factories or they want fancy wages.' Domestic wages, as far as I could check, had almost doubled since 1960 whereas professional salaries had, if anything, gone down because pay increases had been more than mopped up by increases in taxation, compulsory loans to the Government and inflation. The standard of living of all my friends without exception had visibly gone down. The older generation grumbled; the younger generation, especially the women, instead of grumbling were sitting down to see how best to cut their saris to their cloth and they were discovering that the most effective way was to live, more and more, as if they were in Europe. This discovery is bound, ultimately, to bring with it far-reaching changes, leading, as in Britain, to the dual roles of husband and wife, especially when, as in so many cases, the wife goes on working even after she has children. However, these changes are confined to the better off urban population, perhaps a twentieth of India's population – which after all is still half the population of Great Britain.

THE ANGRY YOUNG INDIANS

IN his excellent book on *India in Crisis* Ronald Segal was horrified by the apathy he found in India. He and I must have met quite different people, at least young people, for the overwhelming impression that remains in my mind is that of a generation of angry young Indians itching to get at the levers of power in

order to put India right. The young I met in 1964 were angry not only about caste but about practically everything. Some were even angry for anger's sake and had nothing very constructive to offer as a result.

I was in Delhi when Dr. Narlikar, together with Prof. Hoyle, a British physicist at Cambridge, propounded a theory of the universe which explains gravity. The Hoyle-Narlikar theory received world wide publicity as in the case of Einstein from people who did not understand what it was all about. The Indian reaction was most interesting. At first there was great and understandable pride that an Indian should have discovered something so important. Dr. R. C. Puri, the President of India, invited the young physicist to return to India and continue his work there. Dr. Narlikar thanked him but quite understandably let it be known that he would have to stay in Cambridge for a number of years before he could decide whether he should settle down in India. This in view needed much discussion among young Indians on the subject of patriotism.

'Narlikar has no business to stay in Cambridge,' thundered a young Sikh. 'Why when I was in America on training my firm offered me a job in New York. I refused because I know it is my duty to India to go home and bring back with me the techniques I have learnt. What would I happen I ask you if all those who are trained abroad and who can contribute to progress go and live outside India? We would remain forever in the cowering age! I too could have an excellent career in America where I would live better and get more money. I had a big car and a modern apartment while I was there, here I have to wait another six months for a ticket. Hinduism and the doors will fall off when I first take her out. But I put India before myself.' Ranjit was getting so excited that Kala, his sister, a lovely girl who teaches English at Miranda House, patted him on the back. 'We know, Ranjit, we know, you just find it first and you did the right thing, but then you are not Narlikar, you are not essential to science, you are only a scientific instrument come to life. Narlikar is different, he is science. He has to look at things from the point of view of the greatest good to the greatest number. Will he be more likely to add to scientific discoveries by staying in Cambridge or by coming here?'

Motu, an astrophysicist on leave from Australia, interrupted

her. 'Narlikar is right to stay abroad. Look at me. I am a theoretical physicist. I came back from Cambridge ten years ago and for a long time all I could do was twiddle my thumbs at the National Physical Laboratory. There was no money for research. They did not even have money for small things like test tubes - or to be fair, one had to fill in so many forms explaining why one needed equipment worth seven and sixpence that I used to go out and to save myself time buy it with my own money. And then, what happened? Promotion passed me by because I am not of the right caste; eventually I was offered a job teaching in a small university where I would have so much teaching to do, and of first year students at that, that I would not have been able to do any research. So I went to Australia. Look at what happened to our great physicist Krishnan. The moment they made him Director of the National Physical Laboratory he was reduced into a gawk for visiting VIPs; and he was so snowed under by petty administrative squabbles and routine administration that he did not do a stroke of research after that. Despite the example of Krishnan who died a broken man I still wanted to come back and work in India. So I left Australia after a while to start a research station in India. I got money from foundations in America and what happened? For political reasons the Government of India wanted to locate the research station in an area which, for scientific reasons, was not sound; they insisted that the jobs should be given on a regional basis and that enough of them go to Untouchables. It would have been a waste of foundation money to set up the institution in India, so I went back - with the money - to Australia. There at least nobody interferes with the scientific side. I may even discover something of importance to everybody one day, who knows; if I do, like Narlikar, I shall have done good to India's name; and it really does not matter whether I do my work in Delhi or in Timbuctoo.'

The others were listening with respect. Motu was not boasting. For five long years he had worked in the National Physical Laboratory where despite his very high political and administrative connections, he had gone from one frustration to the next.

Ranjit was not convinced. 'That is all very well but, if nobody sacrifices himself, how will our backwardness ever end? What if all the British scientists go to America, England will become an

American satellite.' Kala shook her bobbed hair, 'So what? Science is universal. We in India invented the zero, remember, but it is not patented and it has helped everybody to have a zero. We use penicillin, but we did not invent it.' Pushpa, who had said nothing till then, spoke up.

'You all know how hard I had to struggle to continue to teach in Madras. How I had to swallow my pride and glide over every insult, even the librarian coming to search my office on the ground that I had stolen library books! Well, now I have made up my mind not to go on with all this. It is a waste of time. Far better - and I am only a teacher, not a researcher - to try to influence people into wanting the sort of conditions which can lead to progress than to teach them to understand *Hamlet*. I intend to give up teaching for journalism. I shall try to awaken the young, I shall try and expose the vested interests, the corruption of the politicians, and hope that things will improve.'

There was sudden consternation in the little Delli drawing-room. Pushpa was looked upon as a lodestar. She had taught most of them; she was one of the brightest students India had ever sent to Britain; she had come back humbly, to teach 'because in the younger generation lies the hope of India', and now even Pushpa was giving up. She shook her head as if guessing what we all thought. 'I am not deserting. I was offered a Fulbright in America only the other day and turned it down. I am looking for a new tactic - a flank attack if you like, in the hope that it will be more effective. The main reason for my giving up teaching, if you must know, is that my students no longer know English. How can I teach English literature to them? Anybody can teach them the English language, they do not need me for that. I am not running away. In fact I have just come back from a study trip abroad and so did my husband. We are no Narlikars; my husband is quite content to do something at the Atomic Energy Commission instead of staying in America.'

Mention of the Atomic Energy Commission provoked me. 'The Atomic Energy Commission is a disaster for India,' I said impulsively and I explained that I had just met an Indian settled in America who had come out to do an evaluation for the Ford Foundation of what is required to help India in the field of science. He had been horrified to find that there were no less than 1,000 Indian Ph.D.s with foreign degrees at the Atomic

Energy Centre. In all there were well over 5,000 Ph.D.s there, but over 1,000 of them had first class degrees from Yale, Princeton, MIT, Cambridge, Oxford, etc. It was a shocking concentration of talent and a shocking waste. According to him, and to me, most of these Ph.D.s ought to be in universities, in industry, not just sitting in a mutual admiration society at the feet of Dr Homi Bhabha discussing atoms. Pushpa looked at me, her deep-set eyes sparkling intensely.

'Taya, that is just it, if we did not have Homi Bhabha and his quite monstrous empire, nobody would come back to India at all. My husband for instance would most certainly have stayed on at Berkeley, and I would have had to join him there. Berkeley is a lovely place, no austerity, no prohibition, and the pay is good. But because Homi Bhabha is a megalomaniac — as you call him — it is possible for people like us to come back to India. Take away Bhabha and all of us will migrate because nobody in India will pay scientists the salaries and let them do the research that will keep them here.' As always, Pushpa was right.

That Homi Bhabha, the Vice-Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission in India, performs a useful function by providing highly qualified experts with a living and an atmosphere sufficiently congenial for some of them to return to India is true. I had not forgotten the case of my friend Gautam, the son of one of Bombay's oldest and most respected Congress politicians, who went to America to study electronics. Gautam stayed there after qualifying and earned a good living until his parents wrote to say he should come back. Gautam was their only son and they wanted to have him by their side and see him safely married. Gautam came back because the first duty of a good son is obedience but he was not happy. At the time of his return there was not a single computer in the whole of India and he could not earn a living at the thing he had specialized in and which interested him most. For a couple of years Gautam looked around before deciding to launch himself, with foreign collaboration, into the manufacture of a specialized small part in great demand for Indian industries. He obtained the import licence for the machinery after waiting eighteen months for a decision, although the small part he was going to manufacture had had hitherto to be imported and its manufacture in India would save foreign exchange. Once Gautam got the import licence he

ordered the machinery and began to plan production. In the meanwhile the Chinese attacked India and everything was upset. He was neither refused, nor granted, the licence to import the small quantities of raw material without which he could not make use of the machinery. By 1964 the machinery had been lying in storage in crates for two years.

When I called on his father who is an old friend, Gautam was there. I teased him 'Well, how is my budding businessman?' Gautam plunged into his tale of woe. What interested me in this tale was not so much the procrastination and the incompetence of the Government but Gautam's reactions, which was typical of many young Indians.

'First of all,' Gautam said, 'when I finally got the import licence for the machinery, after eighteen months I refused to use my father's name and connections with the Central Government - I asked to get the licence to import the raw material as well. The official in the Controller of Imports' Office who was dealing with my case said that the application was premature and should only be made once I had received the machinery which had of course to be imported too. I failed to convince him that I should get both licences at the same time so that I could start operation without delay. I am still waiting today for the second licence and paying storage for the equipment while the building is standing empty.' What particularly outraged him was that when he had finally received the licence for the machinery he had mentioned to the Minister concerned that it 'had taken eighteen months to get it, *after* the project had been approved by the Reserve Bank which had to agree because of the foreign exchange involved and by the Development Wing of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry which has to be satisfied that the project is both desirable and does not duplicate something which already exists in India. 'Do you know what the Minister told me?' Gautam was still in lieuant. 'He said: "You are a young fool. What is the good of you, father being a friend of mine? Have you no sense?" At the moment the project was approved you should have dropped into my office, or sent a note to inform me. I would have seen to it that you got your licence within a week instead of having to wait your turn.' And do you know Mrs Zinkin,' Gautam, usually so shy and quiet was almost shouting with indignation, 'no amount of my telling the

Minister that this is not the way to run his department made the slightest difference. He simply could not understand and he told Father a number of times, in fact each time he meets him, "What a strange boy you have, so unbusiness-like." Yet Father and I see eye to eye on this.'

His father sighed: 'Yes, that is what is wrong with India today. Everybody is out for themselves and their friends, nobody thinks of doing things the proper way. I agree with Gautam that it is wrong to go pulling strings; fortunately we have a bit of money set aside and can afford to wait while Gautam's capital is locked up. But tell me, frankly, now that you are back in India what do you think? Should Gautam go into politics? And if so which politics?'

As I had been putting myself the same question ever since my return to India I had the answer worked out; without apologizing for hurting my old friend's feelings I said that if I were a young Indian, instead of being angry and complaining about all that is wrong, I would dive into opposition politics. If enough young people joined the Swatantra party, or the Socialist party they could change it from within and make it into a dynamic party, a corrective to the Congress, indeed in due course it might oust the Congress. For a young person to join the Congress was hopeless, ideals and talents would be lost because the Congress party was bogged down at all levels with its old timers – intriguers, people with a vested interest in the *status quo* and therefore unwilling to make room for the young at the top. This was not true of the Swatantra party or even of the Socialist party which were still flexible enough to be moulded by the young.

Gautam's father did not look shocked, hurt or surprised. 'You heard what Mrs Zinkin said, Gautam? Well it is precisely what I have been telling you. I cannot change political party at my age. I am too old, too set in my ways. I have done my bit in the past. Now the future of India is in your hands, you the young people, as it used to be in ours under Gandhiji. Mrs Zinkin is quite right, the Congress party is suffering from arteriosclerosis.'

This political arteriosclerosis explains why there is so little young blood in the Congress. I had discussed the problem of attracting the young into it years ago with Indira Gandhi. Her solution then had been to revitalize the Congress at the grass

roots: politicians must get in touch with the villages, the village leadership must be attracted to politics. Her idea had been translated into action by a party directive. Senior politicians were sent on a *pad-yatra*, a token walk into the villages under the floodlight of newsreel cameras. Despite her efforts, despite her ginger groups, despite her appeals to the young to join the party, the same old people had remained in all key positions, blocking every avenue to power, making it impossible for the young to matter.

There is another reason why there are so few young people in the Congress. The young have, like Gautani, a genuinely different attitude to ethics. The difference of ethics between the younger and the older generation was particularly striking amongst the young managers in Srinagar.

'They make me sick!' Natesh had exploded on the second evening as we sat on the lawn sipping whisky. 'They make me sick with all their hypocrisy. Look at the Congress politicians. All hypocrites: they don't practice what they preach.' And he told us how a Central Minister who makes a fetish of his honesty and always insists on staying in hotels instead of accepting private hospitality, accepted an airconditioner like so many of his colleagues. Natesh was still hopping with indignation at the memory. His father had argued that the airconditioner was not a bribe, merely *nazrana*, a token of respect. The Minister did not need an airconditioner, especially like that, under the counter. As Cabinet Minister his office was airconditioned and he was entitled to two free airconditioners in his house. What finally disgusted Natesh was the feeling that his father was doing more than just paying tribute to tradition. 'If the Government buys our equipment it must be on merit, not on bribery! This was the first time I had a row with Father. Father is a self-made man, he sent me to be properly educated and so he normally listens to me because I know more about business.' This was not a boast. Natesh had been to M.I.T.; his father had never gone to school. Natesh had begun in the usual way, the Doon School and St Stephens; his father had learnt to read and write when his business of second-hand nails and scrap metal had expanded from a one-man-and-wheelbarrow-operation into a business.

Even the young Marwari who did not know all that much English because he had not been to university but who had

made money in industry and sent himself to the course agreed with Natesh. 'The Minister had no business' he said, pounding his own lap as if he was accompanying some hidden zitar player. To our surprise the young Marwari was just as vocal as the other managers in upholding very high standards. They all kept complaining about the Government's inefficiency, yet they all kept arguing that India needs more government interference in every field, and, if anything, even less scope for private enterprise. This was the more surprising to us in that many of them like the Marwari practically owned their businesses. We had spent a whole tea-break sitting under a tall chinar tree on the lawn facing the Dal lake listening to their complaints of governmental inefficiency, corruption and delays. They had been angry with the Government for everything, for unavoidable as well as for avoidable delays. They had given us endless examples of how one has to manoeuvre to get round Government regulations, and of how tiresome and expensive this can be for the small firm which cannot afford to keep a full-time man in Delhi. And yet, at the end of it all, they still wanted their controls.

Venkateshwaran, a professional manager in a foreign firm, who had so far remained fairly silent, tried to explain. 'Private business is unprincipled; even the best ones. You may remember that some years ago, when you were still living in India, there was a proposal to manufacture electric generators.' The Government had approached a big British firm and asked if they could manufacture. The answer the Government got was that local demand was too small to justify local manufacture. The Government then approached the Japanese who agreed to manufacture in India. As soon as the British heard this they sent their Chairman to Delhi to say a resurvey of the demand had shown there was a market and that they were prepared to manufacture in India, provided nobody else got the licence. 'You call that honest?' thundered Venkateshwaran, 'Even my own firm goes in for that sort of thing. Recently we had a comparable haggle over the economy of scale when we were asked to put up a new plant. Without Government interference there would be no progress.' Yet it was the same Venkateshwaran who, only the evening before, had told us how one had to get eighteen signatures from eighteen different Government officials before a certain raw materials his firm needs can be moved from Bombay, where

it is produced, to Calcutta, where it is used. He had also told us how his company had been cheated by the Government. Delhi had asked them to set up a plant in a particular State to use up locally-grown raw materials and provide employment for a depressed area. 'We were told that no matter what happens, we would have a priority for the supply of the raw materials, since the investment in the factory was very large. After we set up the factory and began production, the local Government set up a factory of its own using some of our raw material. We are now forced, at considerable cost and bother, to bring that raw material from hundreds of miles away, and of inferior quality at that.'

Nobody on the course seemed to see any inconsistency between the desire to see India better run and the hankering for more Government interference. Venkateshwaran at least had an excuse for wanting more socialism. Brahmmins from South India like him have little scope in privately owned Indian businesses where preference is still given to relations or to caste-fellows; even in Tatas a large percentage of top jobs are held by Parsis. South Indian Brahmmins are professionals by caste and tradition; they have only their brains to sell and their chances of doing well are better in Government or foreign firms than in Indian private firms. What was so surprising was that the others, the Banias, the Marwaris, the business castes also wanted socialism.

Maurice suddenly asked: 'What makes you think that the Government will become more efficient; you have done nothing but give us illustrations of its inefficiency?' There was a prolonged silence. They looked at each other in search of the words which would do justice to their feelings, the words they had so far not wanted to put together, perhaps because the time had not been ripe. It was Maya who spoke out first. 'I think I know what we all mean, what we all want. It must be the Government which runs things because otherwise it will all stay in the caste, the group, and there will be no social justice. It does not matter if the Government is a bit less efficient.' I felt sorry for them. They were the angry young Indians all right, but their anger could lead them nowhere, at least for the present. The Government too must think of caste and regional feeling. Nothing did the Communists more harm when they were in office in Kerala than their favouring of Ezhava interests. But like my friend

Usha to whom I had given Papillon, they had just began to be themselves and they wanted the rest of India as well to be able to shake off the fetters of tradition. They were impatient for drastic change and could already see themselves running India with the integrity and the ability their elders lacked.

As we sat there, listening to Maya's explanation, I was reminded of a conversation I had had a long time ago with Sardar Panikkar when he was Indian Ambassador in Paris. Sardar Panikkar was sipping China tea in the luxurious drawing-room of the Embassy, 'My dear Taya,' he said, stroking his goatee, 'there is no escape from it. India will have to become Communist before it can become truly modern. Only Communism can do away with caste. That is why I want India to go Communist; but mind you, not today, tomorrow. Before India goes Communist there must be a period of development under a mixed economic system. A poor underdeveloped country cannot go Communist without terror of the Stalin type. Give us a period of planning and progress first. Then we can go Communist without too much disruption and too much suffering. Remember that Marx wanted Britain and Germany to be Communist, not Russia or China. Unless our society is ironed out, unless merit becomes the only criterion, there can be no justice in India; there are too many vested interests for justice to triumph without the help of Communism. I do not want India to go Communist for the Marxian proletarian reasons, but only to destroy caste.' He was gripping his goatee as he added, leaning forward, looking straight into my face with burning eyes, 'not just Untouchability, you understand, who cares about the Untouchables! But *caste*, do you hear me, *caste*!'

Maya's voice broke into my reminiscences: 'Until the Government runs industry there will be too much weightage given to caste.' Her American educated husband nodded assent. 'Maya is right. That is what my sister-in-law from America is always saying: "what is wrong with India is caste; do away with caste and you will unleash terrific energies which can be put to constructive use." You know, Mrs Zinkin, there is a lot in what she says.'

Poverty, corruption, caste, make believe, these are the shackles which keep India down. To the angry young Indians, however, these are but windmills they think they will be able to destroy as

soon as time puts power into their lap. Of all those windmills, the one they are best equipped to destroy is Thata's butterfly, the windmill of make believe.

'Why is Father pretending?' I had known Nitya for so many years that he had come to look upon me as on an elderly aunt to whom one brings one's problems just as one had brought one's toys to be put right. We were sitting on the lawn in Delhi, the electric fan standing near us was blowing its tepid breeze in our faces, the tall glasses of iced lemonade were sweating even more than we were. Twenty year old Nitya was typical of the new generation: the Doon School, St Stephens College and now he was trying for the Foreign Service. His father was typical too, but of another generation: a senior businessman with a finger in many of India's economic pies he tended to shrug everything off as 'teething troubles growing pains, exaggerated gloom'. I pretended not to understand what Nitya was driving at.

'What do you mean?'

'Well, you heard Father at lunch today? You said there were many things which were not going right, like the steel plants, he just dismissed it saying it was all a matter of cutting one's teeth. It is the same thing if you tell him that the standard of education has gone down, or if you say that the joint-family system is retarding progress. Father only looks upon the bright side of things, he refuses to see the dark side. For instance he says that his young Indians, in the firm I mean, are far better than their British predecessors; yet I have a few friends among them and they are nothing very special; I am sure the British before them were just as good, if not better; but Father lives in a world populated by Indian swans and British geese.'

Nitya obviously did not understand his father. I felt glad for India that this was so. 'Has it ever occurred to you that your father is on the defensive, that he has to be on the defensive for his own self-respect? He grew up being told that Indians were inferior, not yet capable, or ready to hold senior jobs. Naturally he has to justify himself and the others and make Indians sound better than they are and close his eyes to what goes wrong and call it teething troubles. You do not think of this because you have grown up after independence; you can look at India and Indians without prejudice. You do not have to prove anything. Above all you are not disappointed. Remember your father

genuinely believed that once India was free, once Indians had replaced Britons, exploitation would end, things would be wonderful. It must be a terrible disappointment for him, especially as I suspect that he is beginning to feel that the British did not exploit India all that much and that in some spheres of life India was perhaps not as ready for independence as he thought.'

Nitya was listening with fascination, his youthful face frozen in concentration. 'You mean to say that Father is not fully *free*, that he suffers from a colonial hangover which makes it impossible for him to be fully the equal of the British? Yes, that is it! Now it all makes sense, it explains why he wears both a chip on his shoulder and pink spectacles. Poor Bapuji!' Poor father indeed. For Nitya's father every Indian beggar, every pot-hole in the road, every corrupt politician, every famine, every failure of policy or planning was an intolerable reminder that India was still poor, underdeveloped. For a nationalist like him it must indeed be embittering to see India stripped of the martyr's halo which crowned her in colonial days. Nitya by contrast sees the pot-holes and the corruption not as something to be ashamed of but as something to be got rid of; when his turn comes, they will perhaps not be eradicated, but they will be reduced.

VI

WHAT INDIA COULD BE LIKE

'God helps those who help themselves.'

WHAT INDIA COULD BE LIKE

THE first time I went to the district of Kaira in 1951 was by accident. The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Defence, H. M. Patel, who was visiting Bombay on business and taking the week-end off to go to his native village offered to take me along. 'You must come and see a part of India which is quite different from any other.' He turned out to be quite right; only in the Punjab can one find something approaching what I found in Kaira.

In most of Asia agriculture is an unprofitable way of life. In Kaira the peasants treat it as a business and they make it pay. In most of Asia risk-taking and initiative in agriculture are left to the Government. In Kaira the peasants do everything and the Government nothing. In most of Asia villages are mud huts and people illiterate. Kaira has three-storeyed houses and village high-schools. The people there are more like European farmers than like Asian peasants.

The District of Kaira is 250 miles north of Bombay. There is nothing special about it—except the people. The country is flat, the soil fertile, but not exceptionally so; the holdings are not large—the average in 1950 was seven acres per family; the rains, as in the rest of monsoon Asia, are unpredictable. There is drought in Kaira about once every ten years. The villages are isolated because the roads are bad and few. The peasants go bare-foot, bare chested, a turban on their head, a primitive sickle in their hand, just as in the rest of India, but the resemblance stops there.

Kaira looks like a bit of the West transplanted in the East. Many houses are modern, with neon lights, ceiling fans and running water. Some houses cost as much as £14,000 to £20,000 and the villages have that new look mingling with the old which makes it difficult to say at first glance whether one is in a large village or in a small town. A number of farmers have tractors, jeeps and cars; even the smaller villages have a high-school. The surrounding countryside is dotted with water-towers fed from

diesel operated tube-wells and almost every village is on the railway line.

How was it all done? As H. M. Patel explained it was done by being businesslike, by calculating profit and loss. He was not boasting.

'We grow what pays us most; we sell our cash crops to buy food and we are up on the deal,' said one farmer who had come to pay his respects to H. M. Patel; that farmer thought nothing of putting 1,000 rupees worth of fertilizers on one acre under tobacco. 'I get Rs500 net back, but if I had grown millet instead I would only make Rs50 in a good year.' In most of India the Government had to subsidize the sale of fertilizers and coax the peasants to use improved seeds. In Kaira only improved seeds were used. Some farmers even grew the latest rust-resistant American wheat flown from the United States. This willingness to try new methods is one of the secrets of Kaira's success. 'The Japanese have nothing on us,' explained the head of one of the Agricultural Institutes of the district. 'The Japanese method is giving a yield of 4,000 lbs per acre; we get over 3,500 lbs and if we get more than that then the strains of rice which can grow on our type of soil begin to lodge, so it is not worth it. But we are trying to develop a strain of rice which will be suitable for our type of soil and which will not lodge; we have failed so far.' What was so impressive was that in Kaira such experiments were done by private institutions, not by the Government; the farmers of Kaira were a few steps ahead of the Government in everything, and the Government was far from being as cost conscious as these hardy peasants; for the Government did not appreciate as keenly as they did that only what pays is worth doing, at least when it comes to agriculture.

Another difference between the people of Kaira and the rest of India was their readiness to migrate and to show enterprise. In the rest of India people are very reluctant to move; they cling to what they call their '*hawa, pani*' — the air and the water — and so, with every new son, the handkerchief of ancestral land gets smaller, more people are unemployed or underemployed and more people are underfed. Not so in Kaira. Land was not really fragmented. The extra sons went in for trade, they ran shops, they scattered to the four corners of India and the world selling cigarettes, *bidis*, spices, running textile mills, lending money.

Thus forty families had gone from Kharamsad, an average Kaira village, to settle mainly in Africa where they controlled a fair proportion of the trade. They had gone to Kenya, East Africa, Ceylon, the Sudan, Birmingham and Glasgow as well.

The same enterprise which drove the Kaira peasant abroad could be seen at home. In the old days Kaira District was a Congress stronghold, the home of Sardar Patel, and it non-cooperated with the foreign Government. Naturally the Government boycotted it and built no roads. Now, under the national Government Kaira was considered a developed area and therefore got no grants or aid. Fortunately however, before the railways had been nationalized, they built a run through the area so that most Kaira villages were already on the railway line. Everywhere in India the Government was expected to irrigate and educate. In Kaira the people did it themselves. There are a hundred high-schools serving one million people. There were 3,000 privately owned tube-wells. 'If we had waited for the Government to build canals, we would have gone dry years ago, so we invested in water,' explained the owner of a tube well. Each tube well had cost £15,000. Tube-well water was sold by the clock at the rate of eleven shillings an hour. Kaira was one of the very few places in India where water was sold, as it should be, on a volumetric basis, with the result that there was no wastage.

H. M. Patel had come to meet his old friend B. B. Patel—all those who matter in Kaira are called Patel (Patel is a title meaning village headman). B. B. Patel, a retired civil engineer had worked in Sind at the same time as H. M. Patel and they had remained close friends. B. B. Patel had decided to retire back to his native land instead of doing what most retired government servants in India do, retire to a town or a hill station. B. B. Patel was not the sort of man who could remain idle. No sooner had he retired than he began to look for something to do. He had been appalled by the conditions in which students who come from rural areas have to live in in the big cities, crammed in hostels like sardines. The cost of staying in the city to further their education was often so high that their parents had to get into debt and once the students had tasted the lure of the town, if only in the form of the cinema houses and electricity, they did not go back to their villages which remained undeveloped as a result.

B. B. Patel decided to alter all this. The best way was to bring the university to the villages so that students need not stay in hostels, so that parents could save money on board, and students would not be tempted to move to the town; as a result the villages would improve.

Fired by this vision B. B. Patel approached the farmers of the three villages nearest to the little railway town of Anand and asked them to donate him some of their land. If they gave him enough land for his scheme he would develop the land – being a civil engineer he knew what to do. Once developed the land would be worth much more than what it had been worth originally. He would return to each donor developed plots worth more than their original gift, he would sell a few plots to get some cash and keep the rest for a rural university which he would build with the money from the sale of housing plots which he would retain for that purpose. In short he promised the villagers that if they trusted him he would perform the rope trick and pull a township and a university out of nothing. The villagers were so steeped in the concept that there is a return for risk money that they agreed to trust him with some of their grazing land. B. B. Patel received in this way 400 acres all in one place, where the three village grazing grounds met. He kept half of the 400 acres for the university and its ancillaries, he announced that he would sell 100 acres of housing plots and return 100 acres of developed housing plots to the donors. The miracle is that before he had had the time to show what he could do he had already made £75,000 from the sale of the 100 acres to be developed as housing estates.

B. B. Patel was waiting for us under a huge tree surrounded by benches and tables; this was his office. He slept in the little travellers' bungalow near the big tree. Without wasting time he dived into the heart of the problem for which he had called H. M. Patel to the rescue. Now that he had received £75,000 he had to build roads, provide water, sewage, generate electricity. If he built his own brick kilns he would be able to build the university much more cheaply than if he bought the bricks. Indeed, he might sell bricks to the owners of the plots as they began to build their own houses. If he had a forge he could make nails, and hinges for doors and locks and hinges for the windows. If he had a carpentry workshop he could make the window frames,

the tables and the chairs which would be required by the university and by the inhabitants of the houses. And since he would in fact need sewers and a water supply why not build a hume pipe plant as well as a prestressed concrete plant for electric posts? All this sounded a bit bewildering to me as we sat under the shade of that tree; but it nevertheless made sense. 'You see Taya,' B. B. Patel's wiry moustache was quivering in the heat with excitement, 'after all, the purpose is to help the people round about. This will help them a great deal. It will create small scale industry centres. I shall train not just myself of course, but with the help of experts, masons, blacksmiths, potters, carpenters, etc., and this is what the villagers need. Properly trained artisans, who can go back to their villages and make drains, tables, doors and earn a living in doing it. And why should we stop there? We shall need a lot of printed materials, books, lectures, etc. It is very expensive. We can print our own; indeed we can earn money by doing printing jobs for others, as far away as Bombay City if need be. Printing is a fairly simple process, there is no reason why, once we have electricity, it cannot be done in rural surroundings; this would reduce the cost at no expense to quality.' I had not forgotten how the *Economist* had been printed by Belgian nuns on their own little press, the year British printers had gone on strike and fantastic as his scheme sounded I found myself nodding agreement. After all a man who had been able to get first 400 acres of land and then £75,000 from farmers could do more difficult things than conjure a printing press from the depth of his own enthusiasm. H. M. Patel was looking at a series of blue prints—the layout of the university township which was to be called after Sardar Patel, 'Vallabh Vidyanagar'. Afraid that I might get bored B. B. Patel suggested that I take his jeep and go to Anand where another experiment was going on, independently of his own. 'Take your time, H. M. and I will be busy till dinner with estimates and blue prints; and I am sure you will be interested. I shall tell my driver to take you to Kurien.'

The driver did as he had been told. The jeep stopped in front of a small concrete shed facing the railway station at Anand and I was taken to see Kurien. Young, lively, short and darkly handsome, Kurien had been devoting the past two years to a revolutionary experiment which had come his way by chance, had

transformed his life and was in due course going to transform the life of the countryside around him just as surely as the realization of B. B. Patel's dreams.

A steel engineer working for Tatas, Verghese Kurien had been sent to America during the war on a Government of India scholarship. The only scholarship that was offered at the time was in dairy engineering; rather than turn it down he took it. By the time of his return to India Kurien had become interested in dairy engineering, because he was a keen cooperator at heart and he had come to the conclusion that at least under Indian circumstances dairy engineering must be linked to cooperatives. He had gone to America as a Government of India scholar; he had therefore to report to Delhi for a job. Sardar Patel heard of Kurien and sent him to Anand in 1947. Sardar Patel had always kept an eye on his native district of Kaira where he had advised a group of farmers from Anand to form a cooperative under the leadership of an energetic farmer by the name of Tribhuvandas, and to buy a derelict pasteurizing plant. This plant had been used by the Government during the war to supply pasteurized milk to the armed forces. The plant cost £3,000, Tribhuvandas got sixty farmers to purchase shares worth £7.10.0 each to form a cooperative. Their interest in the scheme was largely due to the fact that they owned buffaloes. Tribhuvandas set out to develop the cooperative and with the help of Kurien a great experiment began.

The milk from nearby villages was taken into Anand, pasteurized, shipped to Bombay in milk cans on the express train and sent to the Aarey Milk Colony outside Bombay City to help supplement Bombay's milk supply. Buffalo milk has a fat content which is much higher than cow's milk. The milk from Anand was used at the Aarey Milk Colony after dilution with water and fortification with skim milk powder as 'toned milk' to supply cheap milk to the city's less affluent customers.

When I met Kurien he was seeing big, just as big as B. B. Patel. 'I hope you will come back and visit Anand soon and you will see; this cooperative is going to grow. Tribhuvandas is a wonderful chairman. We already have an apex society, it is only a matter of time before the branches multiply; at present we cannot take more members because the pasteurizing plant is working to capacity. All our profits are swallowed by Aarey;

they pay us very little for the milk, because they have to re-pasteurize it. But wait, when we get tanker waggons, and a real pasteurizing plant, then we shall be independent of Aarey and the cooperative will grow and grow.' Kurien's curly black hair shook with enthusiasm, his teddy bear eyes aglow with vistas of rivers of pasteurized milk. 'And one day we shall be making butter, and baby food, and skim milk powder, and cattle-food, and cheese, just wait and see; dairy farming is a total complex, best conducted through cooperation. At present we are limited by the fact that, in addition to the small capacity of the plant, there are no roads, the milk cannot travel far without being churned into butter or going sour; but we will build roads also.'

When Kurien said there were no roads he was not exaggerating. The next day H. M. Patel and I set out by jeep for Dharmaj his own village, thirty miles away. There had been a small shower during the night so that the dust had been mercifully washed away from the road. The driver, however, looked far from happy. He knew that we were expected for lunch in Dharmaj and he insisted that we set out by 8 o'clock without delay. He was wise. It was after 2 p.m. when we arrived at our destination though we drove, or pushed the jeep or dug it out of the mud, nonstop for the whole of the six hours and the thirty miles which separated Dharmaj from Vallabh Vidyanagar. The roads, if one can euphemistically call road bullock cart ruts with their tendency to turn into ponds, tanks, lakes and torrents at the first rains, were abominable. 'People in Kaira go from village to village either on horseback, on foot or by train, not by road,' laughed H. M. Patel, 'this is what comes of being the most advanced district of India! But give us time, we shall build roads too. Kurien must have told you of his road scheme.' Kurien had, though I failed to see how a milk pasteurizing cooperative could become a public works department.

We arrived at Dharmaj exhausted, covered with mud from head to foot, famished. A sumptuous meal was waiting for us, the sort of meal to which all the ladies of the place had collaborated to honour their guest. H. M. Patel was the pride of his village, the bright boy made good. The son of a most respected school teacher turned stockbroker, he had been educated in England from the age of thirteen, he had gone to Oxford and got into the Indian Civil Service, he had had a most spectacular

career culminating in his being the Secretary of the Ministry of Defence, the man who was in effect running the armed forces and planning the Defence of India. We ate in the tallest and smartest house of Dharmaj, the house of a *patidar* who had earned a great deal of money in Africa but himself lived in Bombay. For the honour of the family name he had built this huge white elephant in his native village, on three floors, all wired for neon lights ready to be lit as soon as the electrification scheme reached Dharmaj in three year's time.

As we sat in the main living-room eating delicious eats which must have taken the womenfolk days of preparation people kept coming to present their respects or ask advice from the great man. I suddenly realized what it means to be the successful member of a tight knit community, both the power it gives one and the burdens it puts upon one. For a long time H. M. held a very informal and democratic sort of court; he was embraced, slapped on the arm and the thigh, squeezed by the hand, some people even touched his feet in sign of respect, all had brought their problems to discuss. While he was ministering I strolled out into the streets. The village which looked like a city if one remained in the main street with its three-storeyed buildings of stone, concrete and its cast-iron balconies and verandas had its slummy messy quarters too. The side streets, if one could call streets mud and muck ruts in which chicken and cattle wallowed together with flies sucking the effluent of the houses' open drains was a reminder that Dharmaj when all was said and done, was a village.

'You should retire here, amongst your people and teach them how to live, how to build drains, how to have pits for rubbish, you would have such a lot of influence,' I told H. M. as we drove back to Vallabh Vidyanagar later that evening. 'You are quite wrong; they listen to me now because I do not live among them, they see me seldom, they look up to me and my wisdom, but if I lived amongst them they would see how unorthodox I am, how I break the taboos of my caste, how I bring up my daughters, how I have a peg of whisky in the evening, they would not listen to me, I would lose caste and face. That is why I have just bought a plot of land in Poona and I shall build a house there for my old age.' I could not help but see the wisdom of his argument for I knew nobody in India who had brought up

his daughters in a more permissive way than he had, so that he had set a bad example by undermining all those parents who were trying to make their children conform to age-old customs.

The next time I went to Vallabh Vidyanagar two years later it was at the invitation of H. M. Patel once more. He was still the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Defence, and he was going to Anand to talk to the students in an attempt to recruit for the National Cadet Corps. The N.C.C. was a scheme he had created on an All India basis in an attempt, not so much to emulate the Officers' Training Corps or even a corps for training privates—but in an attempt, as he explained, to instill discipline and punctuality into the young. He was going to address a meeting together with the officer in charge of the N.C.C. and he wanted me, as a foreign correspondent, to give a talk to the students also.

The approaches of B. B. Patel's tree and traveller's bungalow had been transformed out of recognition. Already there were half a dozen two-storeyed residences housing the professors and their families; two large dormitories on three floors each were filled with students, a few class-rooms and halls were ready, there was an electric generating station and there was running water laid on even if the streets were still bare tracks of rammed earth and if the trees had not grown along what would one day become alleys. To my amazement I was told that there were 2,500 students, a quarter of them girls, enrolled at the university for arts, science and crafts. The land round the university complex had gone up ten times in value and people were beginning to build houses for themselves. There was a hospital as well as a tile factory belonging to the university working round the clock to supply it with roofing. 'Later it will supply the surrounding villages with tiles for their houses at commercial rates. We use here the Mangalore tile type which has been proved to be the best for Indian conditions. It was, you may be interested to know designed by European missionaries in Mangalore many decades ago, it has great advantages and it is cheap. But it cannot be made by the village potter. So we are training potters from the vicinity and giving them moulds which are made by our carpentry workshops.' The cement casting plant was doing very well, so did the small-machines work-shop and the

workshop in which the local blacksmiths were being trained in the making of simple but modern agricultural implements.

My lecture to the students was a total flop. H. M. had forgotten to warn me that their command of English was scant, that their English education had not advanced beyond that of twelve or thirteen year-olds in Britain. Most of them had never left their villages before coming to the rural university. They had gone to their local village school and then to the local high school. To follow a talk by a foreigner, whose accent was not familiar and about sophisticated matters, was a strain they refused to take for the whole forty minutes I had been asked to speak. After half an hour their attention was so evidently elsewhere that I asked them if they wanted me to stop; they said 'yes' and I did, somewhat abruptly to H. M.'s profound embarrassment but my great relief.

B. B. Patel's dream was beginning to take shape. But what about Kurien's? I called on Kurien in his little shed by the railway station. Things were going well with him too. In the first year he had pasteurized 1,200 tons of milk, and last year the amount had gone sufficiently up for him to dispatch 10,000 tons of milk in addition to what was being consumed locally in the town of Anand and in the university campus. He was already collecting buffalo milk from a radius of 600 square miles—all that the condition of the roads would permit and for this purpose he was operating a small fleet of trucks belonging to the Milk Producers' Cooperative. The trucks went as far as the roads and the heat would allow and collected the milk brought to the various collecting stations by headloads from the villages. 'We have been promised a new pasteurizing plant, then we shall be able to accept more villages in our cooperative and collect milk from further away—provided the Government builds more roads. It cost £375,000 to build a mile of road in our part of the world because the metal has to come from far away. We own our trucks, we pay out good dividends but we cannot do more than repair existing roads, this we do, the rest is for the Government to do.' Kurien who had just got married took me over to his little house to meet his wife, a lovely girl from South India with huge grey eyes, the figure of a goddess and the golden complexion of straw. I was even more charmed by her enthusiasm for the cooperative than by her extraordinary good

looks. 'You should listen to Kurien, he is going to make butter, he is going to make all sorts of things. He has already recruited a highly trained Indian veterinary doctor who is going to improve the breed of buffaloes, their milk yields; he will grow fodder and turn the cooperative into the biggest of its kind in the world.' Her eyes were glittering with proud affection.

I came back to Anand in 1958. This time it was to see what had happened to the Milk Producers Cooperative.

Gone was the little shed facing the railway station. The Cooperative headquarters had been shifted to about a mile away into a self-sufficient estate complete with its own electricity generation, its workshops, garages, trucks, pasteurizing plants, dispensary for man and beast, silos for fodder, offices and staff colony including a guesthouse.

By now the Faira District Cooperative Milk Producers' Union (to give it its full name) claimed to be the largest in the world. Its dairy had just been rated the best in Asia by the Food and Agricultural Organization in Rome. The Cooperative had 40,000 primary members in addition to its sixty founder members; it serviced 138 member societies scattered over 1,200 square miles. The share capital was £30,000 and in 1958 the turnover £1½ million. More important, however, the Union had brought prosperity to the countryside. The 40,000 members owned between them 60,000 water buffalo cows. The average milk yield of these beautifully ugly beasts was low - 250 lbs a year, but it had an 8 per cent fat content against the 5 per cent of a good Western cow.

I arrived at Anand at 4 a.m. Kurien, who was waiting for me, suggested I go out at once to watch the milk collection. 'You can be back by eight, have a bath, eat your breakfast and fire your questions at me in the office by nine.'

In each of the 138 villages - each village had its member society - there was a centre for the collection of the milk which was measured and tested for its fat content by an employee of the village cooperative. The buffalo owner was paid in cash at the rate of 4½d per pound of milk of 8 per cent fat, the very next day. The milk was collected twice a day; once early in the morning, once late in the afternoon. In this way the trucks did not have to travel when the heat of the day would damage the milk.

The Government had finally woken up from its inertia and built thirty miles of main arterial milk roads; the village societies had built their own approach roads.

The Union not only brought and processed the milk, it also organized and assisted its member societies. For instance it ran a free artificial insemination centre with sixteen stud bulls and fourteen sub-centres. Half the cost of this scheme was borne by the Government of India's Key Village Fund for the Improvement of Livestock. 'Last year,' said Kurien, his teddy bear eyes bobbing with triumph, 'we inseminated 9,000 buffalo cows and we had 72 per cent success. We also run two mobile veterinary vans which visit each village twice a week; but if there is an emergency and the vans have to go out specially we charge 15/- for the visit. We have also helped some of the villages to put up milk collection centres. We have so far given £150 to fifty-five villages who were too small to pay for themselves for the building in which the milk is collected, tested and weighed. You must remember this cannot be done in the open; after all it rains buckets during the monsoon, and the money has to be kept safe while it is being paid out. We do not keep money in the villages, it comes and goes with the milk trucks. It is very important to pay cash every day; accounts are no good, you see if the milk is watered, there is an immediate penalty in that there is a financial loss, and this teaches the buffalo owner not to do it again. Another thing we are doing is to share the cost for building water supply schemes with the member society. So far we have set up fifty of them.'

Every day 10,000 gallons of milk were shipped to Bombay by rail in tankers. 'New Zealand has given us eight tankers as a gift under the Colombo Plan. Remember, I told you we would ship milk in bulk one day. Well now we do, thanks to our friends in the Commonwealth!'

In winter when the flush of milk is great so that the buffaloes produce twice as much milk as Bombay's Aarey Milk Scheme can handle, Kurien manufactures milk products which he stores and sells the whole year round. 'The Amul Dairy - 'Amul' means 'priceless' in Sanskrit and stands for *Anand Milk Union Ltd* - is a pioneer in dairy products in India, a pioneer which has been emulated by foreign firms like Glaxo, Nestlé's and Unilever. The pioneering was due to the fact that as soon as Kurien

cast his lot with Anand he approached one of the Government of India's Research Institutes with the request to find a way of processing buffalo milk. Hitherto only cows' milk could be processed satisfactorily without deteriorating over a period of time. Once the process had been worked out Kurien asked for help from the Government of New Zealand, again under the Colombo Plan, and from the United Nations' Children's Fund. Between the two he got the tankers worth £ 23,300 and a milk powder plant worth £ 58,000 which brought the total cost of the dairy machinery up to £ 225,000. In exchange for the UNICEF gift Kurien had to undertake that for five years the Union would distribute six ounces of free pasteurized milk to 16,000 pre-school children once a day. UNICEF knew very well that once we began we could not stop the distribution of free milk even after the five years are up.

By 1958 the name Amul had already become a household name for butter in Bombay. I only bought Amul butter myself but I had not realized that Amul manufactured £ 1 million worth of products during the winter months. Amul butter had replaced imported butter and there was already a premium on Amul skim milk powder and the still limited amounts of Amul ghee (clarified butter) as well as on Amul's sweetened condensed milk. Amul also made casein for industrial uses. Kurien's new dream was to plunge into the manufacture of processed cheese and cattle food. He told me that there were still sixty villages wanting to join his Union. 'The limitation is equipment to process the milk during the winter. After all milk is not something like grain which can be stored just like that. It has a very short life and if it is not dealt with in a matter of hours—remember our climate—it goes bad. In fact it is because we do get milk which is bad by the time it reaches us that we make casein, that way we waste as little as possible.'

'You must come with me this evening, and bring your camera. I will take you to a UNICEF milk centre and then I can answer more of your questions. Now I must go to a staff meeting and then I must report to my chairman. You have not met Tribhuvandas? You must! He is a wonderful man. I shall try to arrange something, but mind you he speaks only a few words of English.' That evening as we drove to Narsingha, Kurien and I, this time in his little car on an excellent milk road,

he talked with his normal enthusiasm. 'The real value of the Union is not in that it provides Bombay with milk, or India with butter, but in its tie-up with the villages. We have pumped back into the villages a new life far more successful and sustained than the Community Projects, and far more ambitious too. Do you realize that the income from each buffalo, and remember that our members are small people with an average holding of 1.5 buffalo, is exactly the same as the income from *three acres of land*! And the beauty of it is that the landless, the Untouchables also can and *do* have a buffalo, they keep it tucked in their hut and feed it with what they can get, that is why I am so keen on a cattle food plant. And there is something else also. In this part of the world, as indeed in most of India, looking after cattle, unless it is a herd, is the woman's job. The Union provides the village women with an independent income which they get in petty cash every day. We pay out as much as £1 million for the milk to all these women and this, if you count their families, benefits no less than 200,000 people. The Union is part of the life of Kaira! And we do not only help with water supplies, and veterinary service, we help financially with village schools, village hospitals, village libraries. Mind you, though I myself come from Kerala, India's most literate State, I must take my hat off to Kaira. Each village has its library; this goes back to the days of the Congress struggle under Sardar Patel.'

We had reached Narsingha where we were met at the milk centre by H. D. Patel, the chairman of the cooperative. His unshaven face was gleaming with pride as he posed for my camera, after Kurien had told him perhaps over-optimistically that his photograph would appear in a newspaper in '*Bhilai*'—England. Yet, as H. D. Patel answered my questions—we were still too early for *Donceph Milk* as the villagers call the distribution—I could see that he had good reason for pride. 'We charge them 21/- per tap per year. Narsingha is a small village. Three years ago we had no taps. Today there is a long waiting list for taps; we have already installed seven taps in private houses, there are of course the public taps, but they are free.' Narsingha must be—together with the other Kaira villages belonging to the Union, the only place in India where people have taps in their village huts. I was indeed amazed. H. D. Patel took me to look at the taps. On our return to the milk

centre we found perhaps a hundred children squatting on the ground waiting patiently for 'Ooniceph meekek', each clutching a container in his or her small hands. There were the children of the better off villagers, H. D. Patel's own granddaughter was there too, and the children of the poorest of the poor, the Brahmin children and the Untouchable children. One could tell them either by their clothes or by the containers they brought for the milk to be poured into. Children from comfortable homes had brass lotas, poor children used old tins, poor children wore rags and the Untouchable children tended to squat at the back, away from Brahmin children. Nevertheless the very fact that they were going to drink their milk together at the same time—taking the milk away was not allowed—was in itself revolutionary in terms of the colour caste. We watched the milk distribution, babies being fed by elder sisters or brothers hardly out of babyhood themselves—school children no longer qualifying for free milk. Here and there I noticed an odd cheat who would gulp the milk down as fast as possible, and move innocently back into the line to get a second helping. H. D. Patel smiled when I mentioned this. 'I know,' the village headman grinned, 'I know, they cut the queue and pretend they have not had their milk, at least some of them do. But we close our eyes. After all it's good for the children to drink milk and we hope that they will get into the habit and that their parents will give them milk and that the habit will spread. I am sure that you know that in our country milk is a luxury reserved for the very old, the sick, the Gods and the rich. That is why women do not wean their children until they are quite old and capable of eating everything; once they are off their mother's milk they probably do not see milk again, except on pujas.' H. D. Patel is an old wizard who knows how to get under the villagers' skins and make them do what they would not do left to themselves. I got the proof of this in Dralol the next village when I chatted with Savitribhen, an old woman with a rugged, wrinkled face enriched by a moustache and the tell-tale stained battlements of her front teeth. 'Ooniceph Meekek puts flowers on the cheeks of children, I have seen the flowers with my own eyes. Before Ooniceph Meekek I used to sell all the milk from my cow, now I first keep one pound of milk for my great-granddaughter, so that she too has flowers on her cheeks.'

I could not be in Anand without paying a visit to B.B. Patel and the Vallabh Vidyanagar University next door. There too things had been progressing by leaps and by bounds. At the time of my last visit when I had failed to interest my student audience, there were some 2,500 students but most of them were living in their villages and came to study on foot, by train or on bicycles, as there were only two residential hostels. Many of the classes still had to be conducted in the open air or in shifts. Things had changed. There now stood, around the bust of Sardar Patel whose protecting shadow was casting its benevolence all round, a full-fledged university township with five colleges, one polytechnic, hostels for 2,000 students of both sexes who studied for degree in arts, science, education and engineering. Forty per cent of the student were educated free. B. B. Patel had not forgotten that his main purpose in building the University had been to bring education to the rural poor. Anyone whose parent had an annual income below £63.10 did not have to pay and there were canteens, medical and provisions for their children if they were saved in order to help the University to keep its doors open. How surprising had been the progress of the University that it was beginning to attract notice and outside assistance, for it is true everywhere, that to those that have, shall be given. At first an Indian industrialist, goaded by H. M. Patel who had taken him to visit the University, donated over £200,000 and in 1957 the Government of Bombay had been cajoled into matching that gift.

Beside the University, which was still growing and whose Engineering Department had become known throughout India, the township had a Montessori school, a number of primary schools and a Technical Institute as well as a shopping centre. But the most remarkable feature was the manner in which expansion and the running costs were being met from self-generated finances. The pre-stressed concrete casting factory which originally made lamp-posts for the township was now making telegraph poles for the whole of the State of Bombay and thus provided not only employment and training but paid for all the freeships. Indeed, by 1962 the various workshops and factories belonging to the University had earned £750,000. By now the institutions were sufficiently well established not to have to depend upon the continued attention of their founder. B. B.

Patel, who had been the Vice-Chancellor of the University and who had come up for re-election, had been displaced by the State Government (in India it is the State Government which appoints Vice-Chancellors) which had given the post to a Congress politician whose main qualification was that he had been defeated at the general elections. The students who wanted B. B. Patel to be re-elected had shown their outrage by rioting and there had been so much intrigue against the new Vice-Chancellor that the Government of Bombay had had to purchase a truce by sanctioning a large grant.

As I had seen both the dairy and the University grow from jungle and scrap it was only natural to pay them a farewell visit in 1960. However, I had an added reason for going to Kaira. H. M. Patel was now living there. From being Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Defence he had become the Principle Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Finance. After years of selfless service he had been sacrificed to power politics when T. T. Krishnamachari, his Finance Minister, had had to resign for telling lies to Parliament. In his valedictory address T. T. Krishnamachari had, with Nehru's silent connivance, tried to ruin his Secretary. H. M. Patel had been vindicated when the Public Service Commission which investigated the charges against him found him innocent and the Minister guilty. Disgusted by the readiness of Indian politicians to look for scapegoats H. M. Patel had retired in 1959 and settled in the University to which he was now devoting his great administrative ability. He had been put in charge of all the assets and industries of the University. He was working in an honorary capacity, having decided not to take any money from government or public institutions. He lived on his pension and the 1,000 rupees he was getting for running the Navjivan Trust, the publishing trust dedicated to Gandhi.

By the autumn of 1960 H. M. Patel had become deeply involved in developments in every direction. He was the Chairman of the University's Trust, he was conducting English classes on the campus, he was organizing Rural Surveys for the Planning Commission and doing Community Project work. Above all he had become the Chairman of the Electricity Board of Gujarat, the Chairman of the Nardaba Hydro-electric project, the Chairman of the Dhuvaran thermal power plant for the generation of

the Government of Gujarat on all matters of administrative importance and going to Delhi whenever necessary to represent them. In all these various capacities he was working for the nominal fee of 1/6 per month. He was hard up and thinking of selling his station waggon to buy a small car. 'Fortunately I only have one more daughter to educate and we Patidars do not give our daughters dowries.' I had not forgotten what he had said when I asked him during that meal in Dhanraj why he did not plan to settle in Kaira district. The fortitude with which he had settled was admirable, especially since one of his daughters had married a Roman Catholic and Uma the eldest was in a shocking state of affairs—over thirty, and still single. Things cannot have been easy either for his wife. But he seemed not to bother and she seemed reconciled to her daughter's odd ways. As she explained as I was savouring her admirable cooking one morning while her husband had gone to a meeting of the Gujarat Cabinet at Ahmedabad some two hours away, 'We are home, amongst our own people, we can be useful and it is appreciated not like in Delhi where all think of themselves and of what Nehru will say. It is good to be amongst one's own people and to do the right things.' There was no doubt that H. M. Patel was doing the right things. If there were more people like him prepared to devote their experience and their time to the problems of rural India, not from above as outsiders or superimposed administrators but as constructive insiders the take-off into self-sustaining growth about which developing countries keep dreaming would be within sight. The people of Kaira, and indeed of India were to show their appreciation on H. M. Patel's sixtieth birthday when they presented him with a commemoration volume with appreciations from high and low, ranging from the President of India to the clerical staff of the rural university. Of all these appreciations the one quoted below is so touchingly naïve that except for the drawings of incense and lotus flowers it is reproduced in full.

HOMAGE AND INVOCATION

Amongst the well-known people of the land
 Let us search for those who are great --
 Is he great, who proudly lifts the flag or
 He, whose name and person are world-known?
 Or he, who with long orations --
 Holds spell-bound people to his worship?
 Nay --
 For these, their name is only great;
 But he, who conquers selfishness --
 He, who strives continuously for better
 He who thinks of others first and
 All the time of his country --
 He is really great.
 Such a great man we honour today and
 By honouring him we honour ourselves
 With humble hearts we Beseech the Lord
 to bless our chairman H. M. Patel.

B. C. PATEL

27th August, 1964

*In the name of
 Secretaries and Staff-Members
 of Charutar Vidyamandal and
 Charotar Gramoddhar Sahakari-Mandal Ltd;
 VALLABH VIDYANAGAR*

While H. M. Patel was devoting himself to Vallabh Vidyana-
 gar and the State of Gujarat Kurien was not remaining idle. He
 had become consultant to the Planning Commission on dairy
 matters; he was starting in Baroda a sister scheme to Anand's
 and helping the State of Andhra in planning its dairy industry.
 He had added a few miles to his milk roads, a number of co-
 operatives to his apex society and he was manufacturing Amul
 cheese to boot. When I called on him he was talking with
 Tribhuvandas. Dressed like a peasant, Tribhuvandas was get-
 ting on in years. His knowledge of English was limited to a few
 words; but he was extremely practical and courteous as I could

sense at once. After Tribhuvandas left I told Kurien what I thought. 'You are dead right,' said Kurien patting his small son on the cheek while his beautiful wife poured us some tea. 'Do you know that this old man is worth his weight in gold. Without him I would be nowhere. It is he as chairman who runs the cooperative, the human part of it, the really difficult part of it. I only supervise machines. Well last year he was invited to visit dairy industries in America. Tribhuvandas had never left Kaira district, let alone India. So I went with him to interpret. In New York we were hosted by U'NICLE. One of their hostesses gave a big buffet lunch for him. There were little flags on all the sandwiches to say what was in them; it was most thoughtful since Tribhuvandas is a strict vegetarian. While I was talking to the hostess he took a sandwich from a plate marked 'roastbeef' and ate half of it before our horrified hostess stopped him explaining that he was eating beef. I felt awful, after all he is a good Hindu and eating beef! When he understood what the hostess was trying to say and saw her distress he laughed, bravely took one more roastbeef sandwich and ate it telling me to tell her that it was absolutely delicious, that he had not eaten meat before but that he would from now on. This of course was not true. In fact he must have felt quite nauseated by the taste and horror struck by the thought and he would have to do various penance to depoluate himself later, but Tribhuvandas is a gentleman.' Kurien was right to be impressed, manners cannot be better or consideration go further.

That evening Tribhuvandas called upon me at H. M. Patel's house. The purpose of his visit was to tell me how much the Union owed to Kurien. 'He has been offered a lot of money to go into private business and start dairies, he has been offered a lot of money to go into Government but he keeps refusing because he loves working for the villagers, and for the cooperative. Do you know how much we pay him? Only £37.10 a month, the petrol for his car, a rent restricted house and that is all. When I offered him an increase he turned it down because he says the money would have to come from the villagers and that if he gets a rise so must everybody else. He is a real treasure.' No wonder that Anand Milk Cooperative Union is doing so well with such a Chairman and such a Manager.

My next visit to the District of Kaira was in 1964 at the end of

my trip to India. It was terribly hot and I was exhausted. I was met at the station by H. M. Patel who had by now become the elected head of the village Councils Apex under the new Central Government scheme of devolving authority to the villagers. As I collapsed with heat exhaustion I did not have the opportunity to visit the ever growing university township but I did notice in the streets many girls students all wearing skirts and blouses instead of saris—a revolution indeed and a revolution which had not reached the big cities (though one frequently saw girls from the smart set in shorts or slacks, but almost never in skirts).

Despite my exhaustion I managed to call on Kurien in his office. 'Before I tell you what is happening to the Union you must have a cup of coffee—you look tired,' he said and rang the bell. A good-looking peon, very clean, came in. 'Mangal, two cups of coffee from the canteen please. Milk and sugar separate. But hurry.' After Mangal closed the door Kurien said: 'He is an Untouchable; the first Untouchable peon in this office. I recruited him myself. He is very bright and very clean. His mother is a widow who owns one buffalo; he was educated at the milk school in his village, he got his further education in the high school next door and has got his matriculation. We need peons who can read English and understand what they read so that they bring files to the right places, etc. Well, I bet you that he is not going to bring back the coffee but will send somebody else. You see he feels himself so polluting because he is an Untouchable that despite my ticking him off many times, when it comes to food, he shies off. I want to get to the bottom of this. It could of course be that the other peons would object if he handles the trays. God knows. There was quite a sulk in the corridors when he joined but he was the best qualified applicant, and he does need the money. Do you know that he walks fifteen miles every day to come to work; he cannot take the milk lorries because it is forbidden and besides the times are wrong.' An elderly peon opened the door and came in carrying the coffee tray. Kurien told him to put it down on the table and to leave us. 'I told you. It will take a very long time for India to get over caste and Untouchability. After all here we are people from all parts of India, I come from Kerala, and there is Mrs Shah the wife of my Veterinary Chief, she is Australian, and there are FAO and Danish visitors and what not, and none of us cares about caste,

and still this sort of thing goes on.' He rang the bell. Mangal came in. 'Take this tray and offer the coffee to Mrs Zinkin,' Kurien said without lifting his head from the file on which he was scribbling. Terror crept over Mangal's face which suddenly went ash-grey. With trembling hands he poured out coffee, spilling it onto the saucer. 'No sugar, no milk please,' I said pretending not to notice. I extended my hand to take the cup, he withdrew his as if my fingers were red hot; the cup nearly fell. He poured out Kurien's coffee hurriedly and put the cup on the table far from Kurien. 'Thank you, Mangal,' said Kurien, 'and next time when I ask *you* for coffee I do not want you to send it in with somebody else; *you* are *my* peon, I chose you because I like being attended to by you. You know, Mrs Zinkin, Mangal is a matriculate, he is very bright indeed and if only he was not so *shy* he would make quick progress.' Mangal instead of looking pleased seemed stricken as if he had been an orthodox Brahmin forced to take food at the hands of an Untouchable. After Mangal left I told Kurien that this really did surprise me, for after all Kaira is one of India's most advanced districts. 'A few days ago I was in one of India's most remote and backward places, Jaisalmer. You know how backward and hierarchical princely states can be even now. Well, I was walking through the town with an important Brahmin merchant, yes in Jaisalmer there are traditionally some Brahmins who are merchants. And we ran into the municipal scavenging van. Beside the driver there were four scavengers on the van. They were intrigued by my camera and started bantering. When I bantered back in Hindi their surprise was great and they asked me to take their photograph. The merchant laughed and told them I had no film left. As the van drove past we had to flatten ourselves against a terrace to make room for it; there was no question of giving us precedence. I was so surprised at the scavengers' behaviour towards the Brahmin that I asked my companion what caste they belonged to. 'Caste? They are Banghis of course,' he said.* 'Well, if this can happen in Jaisalmer of all places, why is your peon so caste conscious that he will not touch your food?'

'Maybe Gujerat is more caste conscious than Rajasthan in the sense of pollution as distinct from status, perhaps because so many people are vegetarians around here.'

* Banghis are Untouchables whose profession is scavenging.

Since my last visit the Anand Milk Cooperative Union had made püss in boots progress. Its manufactures and sales had gone up by 32 per cent; it was now supervising the construction of a sister dairy at Baroda and of another at Mehsana to provide the state with a 'milk grid'. With help from Oxfam which had contributed 300,000 dollars, and with assistance from WHO, the cattle food plant was going up. The pasteurizing and processing plant was being doubled on a site nearby, there were now 378 affiliated village societies and as soon as the doubling of the plants was completed there would be over 500; the waiting list for admission was getting longer all the time. At present all that the Union could deal with was 100,000 buffaloes and 65,000 owners. Turnover was £7.5 million and that year the butter production was using a million pound of milk per day. 'We are getting too big to run things just by dedication and luck. We are setting up a training scheme for our senior staff and in that way we shall also be able to train the staff of the other dairy centres of India. There is a plan to multiply these centres in various States.' Kurien then told me that he had been asked by the Government of India to set in order the Delhi Milk Scheme which had become a political scandal of the first magnitude.

'You see, it had everything against it. They put in charge a man who is an expert in animal nutrition. Animal nutrition has nothing to do with running a plant which deals with so perishable a commodity as milk. The raw material — milk — was purchased by the Supply Department and the Finance Department; they bought from the producers through middle men who made all the profit and cheated on the quality, giving the producers no incentive. A milk scheme must be run as an autonomous corporation with a joint board representing consumers and producers. The technical staff must be free to do what it thinks best. But in the Delhi Milk Scheme it is all cockeyed. The Ministry of Finance can refuse to agree to the proposals of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture. The staff is appointed by the Union Public Service Commission. The staff is responsible to the Ministry of Food and Agriculture. There are too many people involved for the dairy to be anybody's baby. In addition the Delhi Milk Scheme is not a milk scheme, it is a Taj Mahal! It cost nearly £2 million to build and now, after years of operation it only pasteurizes 60,000 pounds of inferior watered down

and chalked up milk. The plant itself is in bad condition because maintenance has been wanting; there is no adequate distribution system or quality control. I told Government that I could not leave Anand, but that I would go with a team of six of my best men to have a look and see what can be done to put things right; there was that awful row in Parliament which forced the Government to take notice. All I can do is advise.' Kurien explained how the Delhi Milk Scheme is typical of the way the Government does things. 'You remember the first time you came I was working in that little shed by the railway station, I had no office at all, the money got together for the plant was negligible, we wanted to make money in order to grow; we grew with the money we made, and then when we had proved our worth we got grants, gifts and loans. We did not begin by squandering money on Taj Mahals. Even today the administrative offices, indeed my room, are most modest; our Taj Mahal is the plant, not mind you the shell in which the equipment is housed, but the equipment itself. It is the equipment which is the productive part. Well, look at the Bangalore Milk Scheme. It began by costing £1 million, before anything was produced. This is because of many factors. Public Works Department costs are double private building costs for two reasons. Government's habit of paying in arrears of up to a year or more means that estimates are increased by 8 per cent to make up for the loss to the contractors on their capital. Then there is the ignorance of those who draw up specifications; their insistence on status, on the number of cubic feet a Secretary or his equivalent should have for his office, on the beauty of the offices, on marble for show. Mind you, the Russians did the same thing with their Metro, we are not unique. But such gigantomania is only possible with public money, whether it is the Taj, the Metro or the Delhi Milk Scheme. Then there is the Public Works Department's lack of understanding of the purpose of buildings. One does not build for all times and for all emergencies. One builds for the purpose of producing. We never bother about our offices so long as they are adequate for the work we do in them, and we do not insist on the life of the building being 100 years. We build an office not a dam; we know that in a hundred years we will want some different sort of office, and that if we need to expand we will. We are quite happy with makeshift. And in the plant

also we do not waste floor space. Most Government plants are far too lavish on floor space; the machines are so far apart that it is a hindrance, not an asset; the floor area is usually double what it ought to be, this also adds to costs. Finally Government *begins* by building the offices and *ends* by building the plant; investing in nonproductive assets is wasteful. We are building for the Government a sister scheme to the one in Bangalore, at Baroda, which will cost, by the time it is finished, £300,000, less than a third of the cost of the Bangalore scheme.' In addition of course there is the almost statutory 5 per cent goodwill money which has to be paid to various Government servants for tenders to be accepted.

Kurien's description of how and why Government milk schemes are so inefficient was a perfect description of what happened in the case of steel also. He laughed when I said so. 'But of course! I was once with Tatas, but Dr John Matthai, my uncle was one of the directors and he felt that it might be embarrassing for me to stay in Tatas, nepotism and all that. So I left when I got the offer of a Government scholarship to go to America. I am not sorry. Milk is much more interesting than steel because you are all the time dealing with people, simple peasants who trust you and whom you can help. I still have friends in steel; and Government steel is indeed very much like the Delhi Milk Scheme. The only difference is that the money involved is 100 times more; so is the loss in return.'

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